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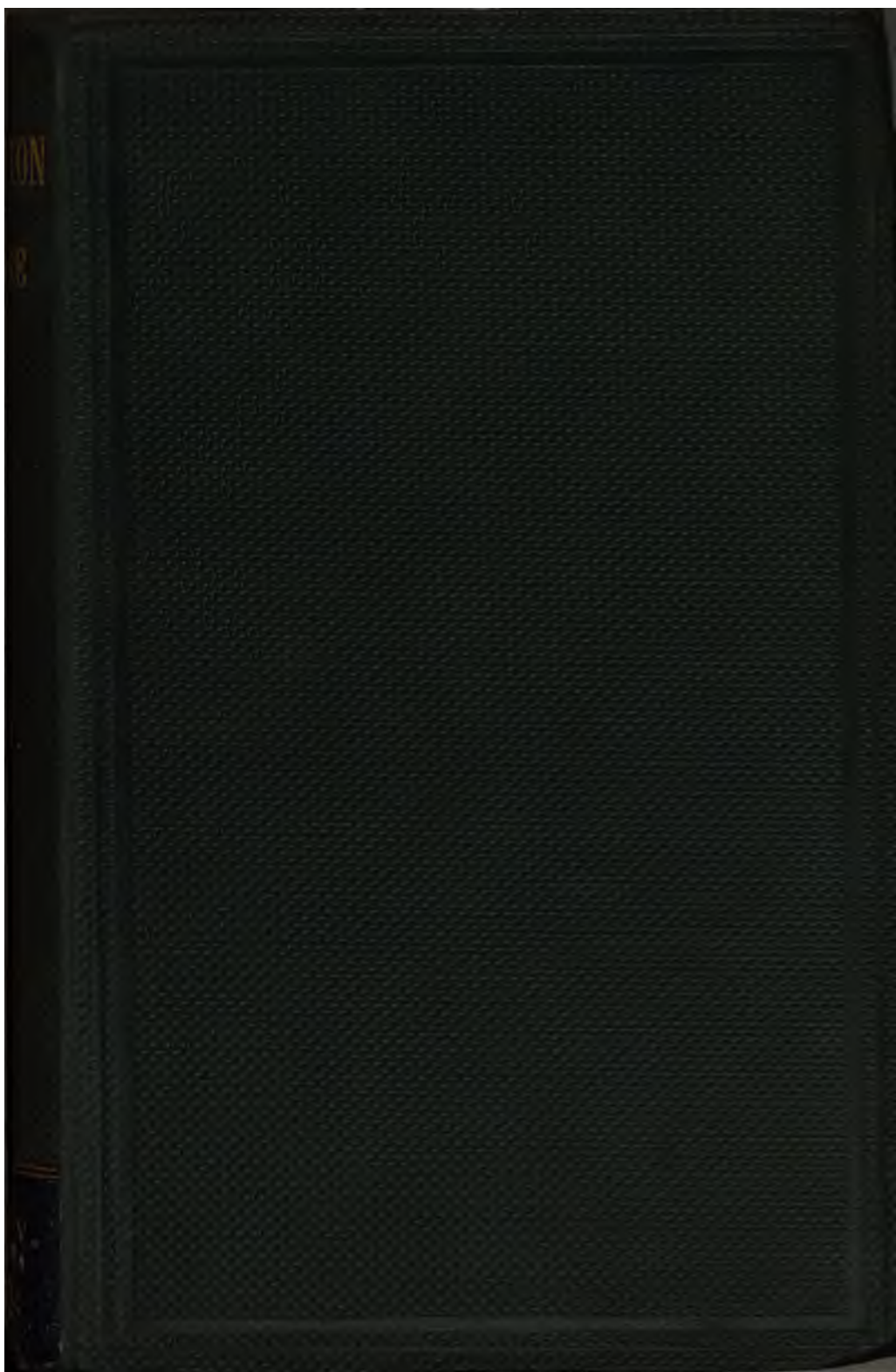
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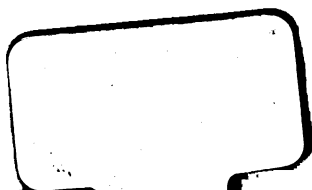
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# HECKINGTON.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. GORE.

Bewailing, in my chambere, all allone,  
Despeiring of all joye or remedye,  
Foretired of my thocht, and woe-begone!  
Unto the windowe gin I walk in bye;  
To see the world and folk that wend forbye;  
As, for the tyme, though I of mirthis fude  
May have no moe, to luke it dothe me gude.

KING JAMES I. (1325.)

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1858.

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# HECKINGTON.

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## CHAPTER I.

DISGUSTED indeed looked the cousin with the heroic name, when admitted into the carpetless, curtainless parlour, in its best days comfortless; and invited by a servant-maid who brushed down a deal table and a horse-hair sofa with a dirty apron, to "please take a seat."

"Poor man—poor child—poor Tiny!"—muttered the spinster, though long accustomed

in her own person to scanty fare and meagre accommodations.—“What a home for the daughter of Sophia Rawdon of Heckington. —Thank goodness I have done my best to release them.”

Too well-bred to overwhelm a self-invited visitor with excuses for the short-comings of the house or the fare it afforded, Tiny hastened to welcome her. The fire could at least be made to blaze cheerfully; and the home-made, home-churned, and home-brewed set before her, were acceptable to a London palate, even had more substantial fare been wanting.

“Thank you for not bothering me with apologies for what is no fault of yours,” was her hasty reply. “*My* fault, rather, Tiny;—for I never rested till I got your honest man of a father translated to a higher see:—so that the dust, dirt, and disturbance I find you in, my dear, are all of my making. And thank Mr. Corbet too, for not making a

stranger of me, but going to look after his wagons at such a moment, as a family man ought."

"I was sure you would forgive him. His hands are just now so full of business!"

"Not half so full, though, as they'll be a month or two hence. But I don't forgive you, Tiny, for looking so pale and thin. What's come to you, child?—Fretting for your step-mother? Not you!—She was a good woman I believe.—But when once that's said on her tombstone, there's an end on't. And girls don't grow thin and pale now-a-days, when they lose even the mothers that bore them. Come, speak out.—What's been the matter?—Did you pick up a lover down in the West, to cut out poor Willy?—Or is he at the bottom of the tears I see rising in your eyes?—Here's your good health, my dear; to ensure which, don't get into a habit of crying for nothing. Before you arrive at my years, you'll find there's quite enough real

trouble in the world, without moaning over make-believes."

After crowning these homely sentiments by a draught of homely ale, she patted Miss Corbet on the shoulder as severely as she would have operated on the huge mastiff at the gate, had he allowed her to approach him.

"I am afraid you expected to find us already settled at Heckington?" said her cousin, repressing the tears which she did not care to hear so roughly interpreted.

"Nothing of the kind. I knew from the lawyers how your father had kept them waiting; and liked him all the better for not rising like a trout at the first Mayfly he saw on the water. But as they knew how anxious I'd been all along about the matter, a little clerk in Meriton's office, whom I've made my friend, let me know that the question was settled; and that the custody of the old place had fallen into the proper hands. And so I thought I'd run down and have a look,—not at *it*—but at

*you.* For, says I to myself, I shall read in their faces whether the poor relation may look out now and then for a seat at her great-grandfather's chimney corner, or a bite and sup at his board."

"And what have you read in my father's face?" rejoined Miss Corbet, a little embarrassed,—for his reception, though not cold, had been far from fervent.

"That Henry Corbet will occasionally put up with me, if not too troublesome. He won't, like my Cousin Jane, slam the door in my face, with one hand, and hold out t'other to me with all but fawning courtesy. However, I pity that woman, and overlook her faults.—Poor Jane has been a scape-goat through life. And as every one's hand has been against *her*, no wonder that her hand is against us all."

"Not every one's hand," remonstrated Tiny. "She has nothing to resent against *me*."

"Hasn't she?—Then she's more unjust than



I fancied ; for there's no one against whom she entertains, just now, a bitterer grudge."

"Against *me*?—I assure you she wrote very kindly to me, a short time ago."

"There are miles of distance between Jane Enmore's heart and voice :—*hundreds* of miles between her heart and hand. I never believe half she says, or a quarter that she writes."

"Then how came you to the conclusion that she dislikes me?"

"From her actions. She looks on you as the present cause of dissension betwixt her and her sons ; and has made up her mind that, were your home made ever so wretched, —if your father were to marry *me*, for instance, or his cook, or old Parkins,—she would never afford you a refuge."

"I am not likely to ask her. Thanks to you, Cousin Lucretia, we are about to turn a brighter page in our lives. But I never thought to give her offence."

"Some people *take* it,—whether given or

not. Poor Jane's blood has been embittered in her veins from the hour she was born. Her father forgave his *eldest* daughter for being a girl—because she *was* his eldest,—and promised boys to follow. But he never forgave his second; more especially when it proved that she was to be the last.—No,—he never forgave Jane, and never could abide her.”

“I fancied that at one time he had made her the heiress of Heckington?”

“Only to punish your mother, my dear—whom he wanted to get married in her leading strings, and who chose to fancy a man she could not marry till she was old. Admit that 'tis a trial of temper to be made through life the tool of other people's hatred,—the instrument of other people's vengeance!—Jane Rawdon, a pretty girl till mortification froze the blood in her veins, was promoted by her parents only to spite her sister, and married by young Enmore only to spite her sister.”

But for Miss Corbet's recent perusal of her

mother's letters, how painful a light would have been thrown by this revelation upon her family history !—

“ Poor woman !—When I find her cantankerous, I am often more inclined to pity than blame her,” resumed Lucretia. “ After falling in love with that handsome young savage, and fancying the passion reciprocal, she found he had married her only to injure Sophia—whom, to the last, he loved to distraction ; and when poor Jane endeavoured to console herself with her children, and the prospect of their inheriting Heckington, her father played her as false as her lover, and committed an act of death-bed atonement by restoring her inheritance to the daughter he had always preferred. Then it was that her infuriated husband carried her off to live among the niggers ; and if half the tales told of their life at Fredville be true, beat her to stock-fish !”

“ My Aunt Enmore is scarcely the woman

to have condescended to complain of his ill-usage."

"Wretched looks—broken health—a humbled spirit, are sad tell-tales. She came back to England an altered woman. She came back trembling at the sound of his voice. Even when he died—died I believe only to get rid of the sight of the wife he loathed,—instead of being enabled to pass the remnant of her days in peace, in the old home so dear to her,—instead of even the prospect of seeing her son installed at Heckington,—the Court of Chancery decided that she must go to her grave before the place could be again inhabited. I often wonder whether this was a concerted vengeance on the part of the old gentleman ; or whether he simply wished, by an accumulation of income, to exalt the consequence of his representatives."

"At all events, my poor aunt was the sufferer. As you say, her whole life seems to have been that of a victim."

"Ay, my dear ! When I was a school-girl

(long enough ago, the more's the pity), and up in my Lempriere, I used to learn a deal about Nemesis, and families devoted to the infernal gods. But even in Christian times, Tiny, one sees people who seem to have been born under an unlucky planet ;—not always grand folks either, or thinking themselves such, like the Rawdons of Heckington. But plain-sailing snobs,—Smiths, Browns, Thompsons, —as cruelly sacrificed as any Thyestes of them all.”

“ Only that the martyrdom of the Smiths or Rawdons does not seem exactly to engender heroic sentiments. The tribulations of my poor Aunt Enmore have only contracted her mind and narrowed her heart. Yet at one time she appeared to be fond of *me*,—the child of her only sister !”

“ *Appeared* to be.—One never knows what she *is*. I, who am of her own age, and have lived year by year, side by side, with her, can scarcely make her out. There are times when

I fancy she almost detests her own children : —visiting on them the persecutions of the husband who drove the iron into her soul, just as she visits on *you* the preference of her mother. I verily believe she would have gladly have seen you become Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington, had not the old lady projected it."

Miss Corbet sighed deeply. It was painful, it was almost alarming, to be involved in the meshes of so complicated a family feud.

"I know, at least, that she never ceased to beset poor Willy with her hopes that the plan might come to pass. It was one of her alleged grounds for opposing Arthur's engagement to that flashy Horsford girl; though perhaps she only threw over her stinginess a cloak which she fancied dignified and imposing."

"Do you imagine, then, that she invited me to Hertford street with the view of furthering grandmamma's intentions?"

"I am not given to imagining, my dear.

I don't see a stone-wall till I've knocked my nose against it. But I know she was furious, when, just after you were established with her in town, Arthur applied for her sanction to his marriage,—pushed on to the scratch by the people at Clevelands. Not only did she refuse it point blank, but reviled him bitterly for his subversion of the family plans, and declared her satisfaction that never, during her lifetime, should he realise his foolish projects. I don't know half she said or did;—perhaps she scarcely knew herself. But her bitterness decided Arthur to betake himself to the continent, under the guidance of his future brother-in-law; and confirmed his animosity to his brother, whom she foolishly cited as the origin of her contempt for the Horsfords. All the old Enmore and Rawdon—Fredville and Heckington—hatred, was thus renewed between those unfortunate boys.”

“I almost wish,” said Tiny, again heavily sighing, “that my father had not accepted the

agency of their property. If it should involve him in disputes with them, or subject him to offence on the part of my aunt, I should be miserable."

"Don't be afraid! Henry Corbet seems a steady-going man—neither tetchy nor irascible. Like Tom Thumb, 'he'll do his duty, and he'll do no more;' and if they don't do theirs, and thank him for rescuing the estate from the hands of the Philistines, the fault lies on their side. Poor old Heckington!—So trim and so fair as it used to be—even in Reginald Enmore's time,—to see it covered with briars, like the field of the sluggard, is really heart-breaking. I wonder what Arthur thought of it?"

"*Willy*,—you mean. It was my cousin Willy who visited the place last summer," said Tiny, suspecting that poor Lucretia's memory was the worse for her second tumbler of home-brewed.

"I mean what I say, child. I mean *Arthur*."



"But *he* has been on the Continent for the last twelvemonths. Have you forgotten his terrible accident at Interlaken?"

"Have I forgotten my own name?—Or are you really ignorant that Arthur has been living a few miles off, on a visit to the Horsfords?"

"Then *he* must be the stranger who called here with them, ten days ago:—*he* was the foxhunter in the storm!" cried Tiny, greatly interested. "How I wish I had known it!—How I should have liked to see him!—Do you think he is still at Cleveland's?"

"Meriton's clerk told me that he was in town. It was necessary for Mrs. Enmore and her son to appear before the Master, last week, to sign some papers connected with the suit. He told me they appeared to be on unhappy terms. Not more so, however than they both are with Willy. Those three individuals, who ought to move through life as one, form the equilateral sides of a triangle,

united only by opposition, or perhaps by pressure from without. But I must be going, Tiny."

"You will not stay and dine with us?—You will not stay and sleep?" added Miss Corbet;—with no very hospitable insistence, however, for she knew the disorganised state of the Grenfield household.

"Dine?—Sleep?—*Where*, my dear, and *how*?—In the coal-scuttle, or the corn-binn?—Well, well!—Don't distress yourself.—I expected no better when I left town. The proof is that I did not bring so much as a carpet-bag, to enable me to stay; and that I ordered the railway-fly to fetch me in an hour or two, to enable me to go.—I heard its rumble at a distance, five minutes ago. So I must come hastily to the real purport of my visit:—the few last words, which, like the postscript of a letter, contain its pith."

Tiny, who had also risen, was beginning to feel a little nervous; poor Lucretia was

fumbling in her pocket, apparently for a letter. —It *might* be from Jamaica ; for the old lady kept up a close correspondence with her favourite cousin !

Instead, however, of a paper of any kind, she drew from the vast repository into which she had been diving, a morocco-housewife or pocket-book ;—one of those over-glossy bazaar productions, smelling of turpentine, which are inflicted upon good little girls or boys in their holidays, as the reward of industry. Poor Tiny blushed deeply as she foresaw an impending gift.

“I didn’t come down here, my dear,” she resumed, “solely for the purpose of devouring your substance, and worrying you with family quarrels. I came to lend my poor aid towards greasing the wheels of the travelling-van.—It is I who have driven you out of your quiet quarters, Tiny ; and it is my duty as well as my pleasure to help you in bearing your burthen. In this note-case, my dear, you will

find a few bank-notes, to assist in furnishing Northover Farm."

"No, no,—I beg and entreat,"—cried Miss Corbet, gently putting back the pocket-book which Lucretia was endeavouring to thrust into her hand.—"Neither on my father's account nor my own, must I accept money from you,—money, too, which you can ill spare.—You forget, dear cousin, that poor grandmamma rendered me independent."

"Independent?—Two hundred a year, or thereabouts!"

"It fully suffices my wants. There is not the smallest occasion for me to encroach on your kind and most unexpected liberality."

"Unexpected, I dare say. Poor relations are not reckoned among sources of revenue. But neither you nor I are fools, Tiny;—so don't let us behave as if we were Horsfords. Your mother's kinswoman has a right to show a kindness to your mother's child,—and her child is bound to show my

grey hairs the respect of accepting what I offer.—So now, take this book without further grimaces ; and instead of thanks, give me a kind good-bye.”—

While hastily tying her bonnet-strings, she imprinted a rough kiss on the cheek of the astonished Miss Corbet, snatched up her gloves and muff, and was at the door, where, according to her predictions, stood the railway-cab, long before her startled young relative had recovered her astonishment.—Nay, she was gone, and fairly out of the paddock-gates, ere Tiny had done more than sink into a chair ; less overcome, however, by the surprise of receiving a pecuniary gift from the Cousin Lucretia so often described to her as at once a pauper and curmudgeon, than by the curious family revelations rattled into her ears.

What a picture of hereditary enmities !—  
What traits of unchristianly abhorrence !—  
To what a race of “good haters” did she

belong !—She was almost inclined to question whether the cool, polished, passionless conventional Barton Freres of the human race,—integral segments of the community, who if they feel at all, feel with the million,—might not be safer and pleasanter companions through life than such *Feuergeists* as these hot-headed and hot-hearted Enmores !

“I thought the old lady was never going, Tiny,” said Mr. Corbet, on finding, when he put his head into the room, half-an-hour afterwards, his daughter in a brown study, with the pocket-book still in her lap ; the fire and their eccentric visitor having both made their exit.

“Poor Lucretia means us well,” was Tiny’s dispirited rejoinder. “She brought us a present, father. But I have not yet had time to examine it.”

The yeoman’s son, aware from sad experience that the presents of spinster poor-relations usually consist in home-knit muffatees,

or a bead purse, continued to grumble on; discussing his disputes with stage-carriers and the obstinate waggoner, who would not undertake more than one loaded journey, per diem, between Grenfield and Heckington; when an exclamation from his daughter, the most vehement he had ever heard from her lips, suspended his dissatisfactions.

No need to question her concerning the cause of her amazement. She was already extending towards him the little note-case which had enclosed the letter and bank note fluttering in her hand.

“Five hundred pounds, papa!—What can it mean?—Is poor Lucretia out of her senses?”

“If she is, may she never regain them!” said Henry Corbet, with heightened colour and the broadest of smiles.—“But what indication of lunacy is there in her letter or conduct?—She says here, that, as her nearest of kin, she always intended to bequeath you at her death, the savings of her income.—And

that, feeling herself to be the cause of our expensive migration, she prefers giving them to you *now*, that you may suitably furnish the abode she has provided for you. Good sense, Tiny, as was ever printed in a book; and a plaguy deal more consideration than is usually shown on such occasions. Long enough before my sister-in-law Enmore would have warmed up into such an act of generosity!"

"And I, who so ungraciously rejected her gift!" exclaimed Miss Corbet. "But do you really think, papa, we ought to accept it?"

"Certainly—unquestionably. There is as much generosity, Tiny, in knowing how to accept a gift, as in bestowing one. She would be mortified if you declined what she has calmly and deliberately offered, and came so far to tender in person. It is, perhaps, partly a matter of family pride. Lucretia chooses that Heckington and its agent should be looked-up to. She wishes us to appear there in a manner to do credit to the family."



Still, Miss Corbet, aware how long poor Lucretia had been undergoing the buffets of fortune, and how sparing was her mode of life, could not bear the thoughts of so large an abstraction from her hoard. She remitted the note, however, to her father, to be placed to his credit at the county-bank; and forthwith addressed a letter to Lucretia, expressing her fervent gratitude without suppressing her qualms of conscience.

The answer was :—

“ COUSIN,

“ Accept without demur. Or expect no further service from that withered stick of the old family fagot of Heckington—

“ Yours to command,

“ L. R.”

## CHAPTER II.

THREE months had elapsed. The Corbets were comfortably installed at Northover. Had the yeoman's son been endowed with the boss of marvelosity, he would perhaps have believed that he need only desire to see rice sprouting in his fields instead of corn, or bustards winging their way over them instead of Royston crows, to find the miracle accomplished :—so singular were the incomings of wealth showered upon his head since the loss

of his poor Mary ! Luckily, his jogtrot habits of body and mind remained unaltered by unwonted prosperity ; and he continued to busy himself with his pig-styes and cow-houses,—his malt-mills and chaff-mills,—as eagerly as though a cheerful, well-furnished drawing-room did not await him on his return from the labours of the farm.

On the other hand, he had been so fortunate as to jump with the opinions of the neighbourhood. Everybody was of opinion that a resident agent was wanted at Heckington ; that the Enmore heirs were too young for the office ; and that, if the Court of Chancery had gone about Diogenes-wise, seeking with a dark lantern for an honest man and good farmer, its choice could not have fallen more judiciously than on Henry Corbet of Grenfield. Seldom does Chancery—a dog with an especial ill-name—obtain such unanimous applause.

If, on the contrary, the Grenfield family had

indulged in the ambition of establishing themselves at once at the Hall, furnished to their hand, and likely to be benefited by occupation, the neighbourhood would probably have set up its back. But they came humbly,—they came to the farm,—they came in deep mourning and a borrowed phaeton; and everybody received them with open arms. It would have roused the utmost indignation of Mrs. Horsford of Cleveland, could she have examined, at the close of a month, the collection of visiting cards left at their door;—not deposited, as in her own case, for display, in a gorgeous Dresden dish, but collected in a homely wicker basket. Heckington had been five years unoccupied. It was a pleasant relief to the neighbouring families to see the hedges once more pleached,—the water-ways once more fluent,—the lodges once more exhibiting life and liveliness;—their gardens dug up and cultivated, and their China rose trees nailed to the trellises.

—Till Henry Corbet took possession of Northover, it was as if the body of a Rawdon, waiting for interment, were lying dead at the Hall.

And now there was a general revival. A sufficient portion of Lucretia's generous gift had been devoted to the purpose for which it was bestowed; and two cheerful receiving-rooms were fitted up with what Henry Corbet considered luxurious comfort, and in which neither Lucretia nor the neighbours detected the slightest fault.

By the time the old spinster and the summer roses arrived together, Northover was looking as cheery as sunshine could make it; and Tiny, in the discharge of her new duties, looked as womanly and thoughtful as if the delicate bloom of girlhood were not still on her cheek. She had been so busy in assisting her father to place new and active servants in charge of the Hall, from which Northover lay at about half-a-mile's distance, that, till cross-

questioned by Lucretia, she was scarcely aware how little she had done in acknowledgment of the attentions of her country neighbours.

"They are all away in London, I believe," was her answer to the spinster's interrogations. "London stretches out its long arm and seizes almost all Hertfordshire, at this time of the year."

"So that you have not yet seen the Horsfords?"

"They left Clevelands directly after we settled here. But dear Amy, who writes less often now that she has her nursery to attend to, has promised to come here for a day, when she visits her family at the close of the season."

"You are a strange child, Tiny," said Lucretia, after scrutinizing her for some moments in silence. "Nothing of the flash girl of the day about you, my dear,—nothing of the fast young lady; or you would have stuck to Lady Armstead, and been at this moment

swallowing the dust in Hyde Park, instead of inhaling the humble fragrance of sweet-briar and honeysuckles. As Willy used to say of you, — ‘ God be praised ! there is still one good, natural, honest, un-backboarded girl left in the world.’

“ You have so long and so carefully avoided mentioning my cousin Willy to me,” said Tiny, with a blush corroborative of the commendation,—“ that I have never liked to ask about him.—But—”

“ I refrained from talking about him, child,” interrupted Lucretia, “ only because I saw that there was a mutual liking between you, which ought not to be encouraged, because it could never come to good.—The blending of Rawdon and Enmore blood has produced evil enough already :—the only pretext for my cousin Jane’s declaration that she would sooner see her son William in his grave, than married to her niece !”

“ Yet you, or some one, told me that she

was a party to the wild project of grand-mamma to make me, some day or other, Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington!"

"But do people never change their minds Tiny? Even Jane, with her obstinate thin lips and mulish temper?—During your six months' stay with her, the qualities which would have softened any other heart towards you, rolled a stone to the orifice of hers. One never knows people till one lives under the same roof with them. *She* saw, as I do, how, every day, you grow more and more like that sweet, patient, gentle mother of yours; who, while living, was ever a stumbling-block in her path.—You look like her, speak like her, think like her, feel like her;—and every word and smile of yours naturally remind old Jane how she was superseded in the affections of her parents and husband, by the Sophia whose place you are so completely beginning to fill. She witnessed your power of attracting even the most crabbed and un-



attachable:—her boorish son,—my bearish self. And it seemed almost in self-defence she vowed a solemn vow, that never, with *her* consent, should you become the wife of either of her sons.”

Warm and genial as was that summer evening, Tiny shuddered as if a sudden chill had come over her. She had spent a portion of the afternoon in training and pruning the new shoots of the reviving Macartney rose!—Was it to be in vain?—

“Still,” said she, in a somewhat tremulous voice, “I don’t see why, if forbidden to be in love with my cousin Willy, I may not *love* him, and love him dearly.”

“Hush, my dear! If you were really what Willy calls a back-boarded miss, you would die sooner than risk such a distinction without a difference.”

“But I am *not*.—Even Willy, you say admits that I am *not*.—So tell me, like a dear good friend, what have you heard of him?—

How is he prospering in the reform of his blacks, and improvement of his estate.—Above all, is he likely to be displeased at my father's instalment here?"

"Too many questions to be answered in a breath, Tiny ; and I scarce know which ought to have the priority. But reply, in the first instance, to an inquiry of mine. Have you positively never heard from Willy Enmore since he left London in August last?"

"Not a syllable."

"Then he's a phenomenon, my dear, and you're another ! If you did not look at me with those eyes as honest as the day, I shouldn't believe you.—But you learnt at least from Arthur, when he was staying at Cleveland's, that——"

"When Arthur was staying at Cleveland's, I never so much as saw him."

"He saw *you*, however ; for he told his mother you had the sweetest countenance he ever beheld. *That* was one of her

grievances.—Arthur, like the rest of us, had enlisted under your banner. But even if you had met and conversed, he was hardly like to tell you how shamefully he had behaved to his brother. When Willy started off, hot-foot, from London, last summer, and we all abused him for going without a word of farewell, do you still suppose he sailed at once for the West Indies ?”

Miss Corbet’s countenance expressed a decided affirmative.

“Then you were never more mistaken in your life ! He went straight to Switzerland,—straight to his sick brother ;—and it was only because he did not choose to announce his intentions in the family till he knew how his advances would be received, that he left us so ungraciously.”

“As if they could be *ill* received at such a time !”

“Wrong again, Miss Tiny !—Instead of receiving with open arms the poor fellow who

had hurried a thousand miles or so without stopping for rest, to throw himself into them, Arthur, in the true Enmore spirit, refused to see him; sent back unopened, to the inn, the letter by which he announced his visit; and informed him that his friend Bob Horsford was all the companion he wanted."

"Poor Willy!"—

"Poor *both*!—The one for possessing too much, the other too little, humanity! All this happened at Lausanne; to which place Arthur had been moved by easy stages for surgical advice. I almost wonder that our dear hotheaded Willy, who had followed him full of kindly yearnings, did not throw Bob Horsford out of the window, or himself into the lake!"

"And *I* wonder," added Miss Corbet, in a low voice, "that he did not write me a line,—a single line,—to confide to me his disappointment!"

"He returned straight to London on his

way to whatever was his place of embarkation—Southampton, I suppose ;—and you were gone ;—gone with the Armsteads—gone to mix yourself up with the family to whom he had just vowed eternal hatred and vengeance !”

“ But *you* saw him, Cousin Lucretia ?” almost sobbed the mortified girl.

“ I saw him,—because, even cut up and indignant as he was, his anxiety to know how I had prospered concerning the Heckington agency, induced him to rush off to me for a hurried interview. And I never saw a young fellow so altered !—He was not the same Willy who came back to us from Dresden, my dear Tiny. His eyes were sunk, his countenance was contracted, his face sallow, his voice feeble.—I could scarcely recognise my own dear hearty boy !—He had had a stormy contest with his mother, too ; an Enmore contest,—after which, they separated in mutual ill-will. A dreadful thing, Tiny,—a terrible

thing,—an unnatural thing,—these contests between parent and child.”

“But my aunt was surely not accountable for Arthur’s monstrous behaviour?”—

“Willy accuses her as the first origin of their estrangement. By repeating to each the random talk of both, she first created a raw. It is never safe to repeat, even to nearest relatives or dearest friends, the things said of them behind their back. Were every one to use the licence, all friendship and affection would be at an end.”

“Acquaintanceship—even friendship—might cease. But brotherlove is too sacred a tie to be so easily severed. Brotherlove is one of the holiest instincts of human nature.”

“An instinct, if sacred and profane history can be credited, too often violated.—However, on this occasion, Willy was decidedly on the right side. He had given instructions that, on the attainment of his majority, (next month, I fancy, he comes of age?) a moiety of the

Fredville property was to be made over to his brother, and had actually carried over with him to Switzerland the deed of assignment."

"Just what I expected of him!" exclaimed Miss Corbet; "I was certain he would leave nothing for Arthur to complain of, as regards worldly interests."

"Ten to one, Arthur never knew, and never *will* know his generous intentions," resumed Lucretia. "After the insult offered to him,—(for his letter was returned, with a verbal message, in a public hotel)—the deed was, of course, cancelled. So much the better, however; for, unless Arthur Rawdon can bully or wheedle his mother out of a handsome allowance, that odious Horsford engagement must fall to the ground."

"I don't want to hear more about their money disputes, dear cousin," pleaded Miss Corbet. "I want to know about Willy. Have you heard from him since his arrival at Fredville?—Has he recovered his health?"—

"If his health, certainly not his spirits. I *have* heard from him; and low enough he seems, poor fellow! With so loving a heart as his, 'tis hard to be tossed about between such a Scylla and Charybdis as his mother and brother. But we've talked enough about him now, my dear; and luckily, here comes your father to ask for his tea, with a face as long as my arm.—What can be the matter? One of the Alderney calves has broken its leg, perhaps, or the wheat is showing smut. There are always evils enough in life, Tiny, to disturb our minds, without creating to ourselves imaginary wrongs, such as jaundice those of the Enmores."

While the sky of Northover was thus mottled, the atmosphere of Higham Grange displayed permanent sunshine. Sir James Armstead had every reason to rejoice in the success of his domestic government. Amy, with a little Amy in her arms, had become the best, as she remained the prettiest of wives.



Throughout the London season, though she accompanied him to such assemblies as were indispensable to the dignity of his public position, all trace of Horsford nature seemed to have disappeared from her heart.

But if thoroughly engrossed by a little creature, the length of whose muslin robes at present doubled its own, she could not but miss the society of her friend, Sophia Corbet; not only from her kindly cheerfulness, but because her aid had been invaluable in doing the honours of the house. Tiny was an universal favourite, who, herself devoid of egotism, was patient with that of other people; and, not ambitious to shine, was content to listen. The bald-headed coterie was unanimous in its regrets for her absence.

Even the Horsfords, who were pursuing their annual speculations in a hired house of the shabby-genteel order, which house-agents advertise as "fit for the immediate reception

of a family of distinction," and a couple of pair of job-horses of which one pair halts all day, and the other coughs all night,—regretted that Tiny, though once the object of their jealousy, had declined Lady Armstead's invitations. They had looked to her as a medium of communication with the unapproachable Mrs. Enmore, and perhaps indulged in the paltry vanity of wishing her to see how completely the impressionable Charles Turberville had transferred to Caroline the homage which, at Higham Grange, was devoted to herself.

Now that his delicate plant had taken root, and was blossoming and bringing forth good fruit in the happiest of homes, Sir James was at less pains to extirpate the weeds by whose overgrowth he had been threatened; the more so, that both the mother and sisters of Amy were considerably subdued in tone by the non-fruit of their matrimonial schemes. They had found out that "captains were casual things;" that even so well-planned a

siege as, for some years past, they had been laying to Heckington, required too slow a match for their purpose. The adverse decision of Chancery had taken them thoroughly by surprise; nor was there much hope that the dry and grudging mother of Arthur Rawdon would make him a sufficient addition to his allowance, to justify the fulfilment of their engagement.

The only consolation left to Mrs. Horsford lay in endeavouring to enlist the suffrage of her country-neighbours in behalf of the poor dear injured Florence, whose long attachment to Arthur Rawdon was thus cruelly thwarted; and by representing the Corbets as people who were devouring the substance of her future son-in-law.

With the vague conviction entertained by most ignorant women, that a man high-placed in any department of the state possesses influence in every other, no sooner was she in company with one of the Cabinet-ministers,

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who appear to be as much the natural growth of Hertfordshire as corn or cherries, than, like the Ancient Mariner, she laid upon him her skinny finger, and unfolded her budget of grievances :—how Chancery held Heckington in its tenacious grip, and how the rightful heir was consequently constrained to remain a bachelor ; till the whole neighbourhood of Cleveland was beginning to get heartily sick of the wrongs of Rawdon of Heckington.

## CHAPTER III.

MEANWHILE, the startling disclosures made to Miss Corbet by her eccentric cousin respecting the conduct and vexations of Willy Enmore, took such possession of her mind, that to continue silent was impossible. Right or wrong, she determined to write to Fredville. It was due to the only member of her mother's family who exhibited an interest in the destinies of Heckington, to acquaint him with the efforts making by her father and herself for the re-establishment of the place.

That it would afford him pleasure to hear that his own little Tiny was flitting about the old walks, nursing his favourite tree, and even attempting a copy of the "Girls with the basket of cherries," which she hoped at some future time to forward to Fredville for his acceptance, she was firmly persuaded. And exiled as he was, he must be so much in need of consolation! In a noxious climate, among disaffected dependants, with no pleasanter recollections to dwell upon than his brother's estrangement, and the harshness of a cold-blooded mother, even a cousinly letter would be acceptable.

She would have given much to speak what she had to write. It was difficult to begin. Quitting her as he had done, and never, since, deigning to afford her the slightest token of remembrance, to frame her letter with proper self-respect, yet express her warm sympathy in his generous intentions towards Arthur, and her indignation at the heartlessness with

which they had been frustrated, was hard to accomplish.

But the moment she put pen to paper, nature prevailed. The ice once broken, the warm under-current of her feelings flowed free. She wrote on, and on,—telling him the story of her happy instalment at Heckington, and her conviction that, to *his* first move in the matter through Lucretia Rawdon, her father was indebted for his present prosperity, and herself for her pleasant occupations.

No need to follow line by line the artless outpourings of that girlish heart. Without exceeding by a hair's breadth the limits of kinswomanly affection, her words were calculated to fall like dew upon the weary heart of the exile; to whom, by the animosity of his family, his wealth was rendered as painful a burthen, as poverty to the great majority of his fellow-creatures. Such a letter was indeed likely to soothe the torrid atmosphere of Fredville as deliciously and miraculously as

though a rainbow had expanded in its sky.

But having announced her gift of the picture, it behoved her to hasten its completion. Her copy was in crayons ; the humble branch of art in which alone her Harley Street governess had afforded her instructions ; and at the conclusion of Lucretia's visit, to enliven which she had spared no sacrifice of time or occupation, she repaired every morning after breakfast to the Hall ; furnished with her drawing-materials, and the joyous face of a person intent on a pleasant duty.

One day—one balmy summer day, such as occur when summer days are at their longest,—she made the most of a light so favourable, to put the finishing strokes to her work. *There* stood on the two easels, side by side, the original and the copy ; the latter exhibiting, of course, less depth of colouring and vigour of outline ; but more of that refined expression characteristic at once of a woman's pencil and



of childhood's grace. As she stood for a moment contemplating her performance, with an exultation foreign to her nature, the smile that played on her cheek and the tears that moistened her eyes, were not the result of self-sufficing vanity. She was thinking of Fredville. She was thinking of the home-yearnings that picture would create ; and wishing it might tend to preserve from extinction the strong family affections latent in the heart of Willy Enmore, which every human being belonging to him seemed endeavouring to extinguish.

The afternoon, meanwhile, was becoming cloudy ; and, anxious to refresh herself after so sedentary a morning, she placed the easels in safety in their accustomed nook, turning the faces of the pictures to the wall ; and hurried into the garden to forestal the impending shower. And how fragrant seemed the atmosphere, and how pleasant the shrubberies, under the pressure of that coming rain, to

which nature seems to uplift its incense of thankfulness!—Her whole thoughts intent upon Fredville and the successful accomplishment of her task,—she wandered on, stopping here and there to gather a flower more tempting than the rest,—till her hand could scarcely grasp its truss of roses; without noticing that the thin grey clouds had deepened into slate-colour, and were gradually becoming black and menacing.

By the time the darkness of the sky had driven her back to the Hall, where she had to collect her belongings previous to a hasty walk to Northover, large drops were falling on the white pavement of the doorsteps, now relaid and recemented.—The hall-door, too, had to be locked previous to quitting the house.

Still holding her roses, she ran rather than walked back to the yellow saloon at the furthest extremity of the suite, whence her drawing-box was to be fetched; still hoping to reach home before the explosion of the

storm.—But what was her amazement on perceiving, in the room she had left untenanted half an hour before, a man extended on the sofa,—asleep, or insensible, or dead ;—his hat having rolled upon the floor.

Her first impulse was to call for help,—though help was unattainable by the utmost exercise of her voice ;—for, burglar, tramp, or corpse, she was clearly unequal to cope with the intruder. A second glance served to convince her that the stranger, whether sick or sorry, was at least a gentleman ;—probably some stranger wandering in the park, who had taken the liberty of seeking shelter from the storm.

If he slept, however, his slumbers must have been light. For on her approach, he started up, snatched his hat from the ground, and without explanation or apology, or even notice of her presence, darted out of the room.

Still agitated by her momentary panic, Miss Corbet could not repress a smile at

the superfluoussness of her fears ; and though the state of the weather was critical, she resolved to give a few minutes' respite, for escape, to the enemy she had overawed by a glance. It was probably some shy country neighbour ; or some person who had business with her father, and had blundered into the Hall instead of proceeding to Northover, to wait for Mr. Corbet.

She was still smiling and deliberating, when, through the still open door, the object of her surmises suddenly made his re-appearance,—self-possessed, gentlemanly, hat in hand.

“ I have thought better of it, Tiny. It is not thus we should meet or part,” said he, extending his hand, which she accepted almost before the conviction rushed into her mind that she was addressed by Arthur Rawdon. “ When I came here, I knew your father had ridden to Hitchen ; and fancied you had accompanied him.”

This unmistakeable hint that he was there

only because he felt secure from meeting either of them, was scarcely gracious. But Tiny could not feel *very* resentful against one whom, at a short distance, it would have been easy to mistake for her cousin Willy;—the same stalwart figure,—the same manly face; only more polished in deportment by the friction of conventional life.

“I would say that I was heartily glad to see you, Cousin Arthur,—though by your own account we seem to meet by mistake,” was her spirited reply,—“but that it would be absurd for *me* to be doing to *you* the honours of Heckington.”

“I hope, however, that you *will* be pleased to do them,” he cheerfully rejoined, as, at that moment, a tremendous gush of rain against the windows denoted that the storm had burst over their heads.—“You are surely not going to turn me out of doors, in weather to which Lear’s tempest was a trifle?”

Relieved to find him so pleasantly disposed,

Miss Corbet laid down her roses, and moved towards a chair.

"It would almost seem, my dear cousin," he added, not seating himself beside her, but leaning against an opposite chiffonière,—“as if we were to meet only in thunder and lightning and in rain!—Do you remember that fearful downcome, in February last?”

"It was *you*, then, who were accompanying the Horsfords to the Wheathamstead meet?"

"The Horsfords and Charles Turberville. But my visit here, the preceding day, was made alone in my glory."

"Alas, alas!—You were, therefore, the strange,—the *very* strange gentleman,—who observed that if it were in his power, he would get rid of every dirty acre of Heckington!"

"*Did* I say so?—Likely enough!—For I was miserably out of temper with myself and the whole world. And Heaven knows there was at that time nothing in the aspect of the old place to put one in conceit with it.—*Now*,

thanks to *you* perhaps, Tiny, it is swept and garnished, and beginning to look like a gentleman's residence."

"I rejoice to hear you say so. I was afraid you might owe us a grudge for the authority assigned to my father."

"I might as well suppose you still bear me malice for my persecutions of ten years ago! I was thinking them over, just now on the sofa, when you startled me from my reverie. But I did not imagine they still produced so unfavourable an impression."

"I have fully forgiven the injuries inflicted by my cousin Atty of old times!" she rejoined with spirit. "It is rather the Lausanne companion of Robert Horsford whom I expected to find bitter and unjust."

Arthur Rawdon started; colouring to the roots of his hair.

"Your West Indian despatches, then, have already supplied accusations against my brutality?" said he.

"I have never yet received a line from the West Indies, Arthur,—I wish I had. For poor Willy must be in sad want of friendly correspondence when even his own brother disowns him."

"My dear little cousin," said Mr. Rawdon, admiring her courage, "in family-quarrels, no member of the family can form an impartial umpire. From our cradles, William Enmore and I have been pitted against each other, till we scarcely know each other as brothers. Some day or other, perhaps, when a few more of the mischief-makers are gone to their account, and perhaps when your gentle hand has assisted to root up the briars implanted between us, we may learn to like each other better. But let us talk no more just now of family feuds; or I shall consider this 'dreadful pother o'er our heads' an evil omen."

He might well say so; for the lightning flashed so vividly into the room that, in compassion to the frequent starts of his compa-



panion, he hurried to the window, and the spring of the holland blind proving rusty, as is usually the case in uninhabited houses, drew together the shutters: while a heavy peal of thunder seemed to shake the old mansion to its foundation.

"Did you see my aunt Enmore as you passed through London?" said poor Tiny, endeavouring to conceal, by an attempt at conversation, her nervous tremor.

"We have not met for some time," was the cold reply.

"Lucretia Rawdon, then?—The old lady has been recently on a visit to us at North-over."

"So much the worse! That woman sows dragon's teeth wherever she goes, which rise up armed men against *me*, and champions of my brother!"

"She naturally prefers Willy, who has been uniformly kind to her, and is most in want of friends."

"Scarcely, I think!—He has one, at least, who is a host in herself. I heard a good deal of you, Tiny, last winter, down in the West. I have long been curious to see the little cousin whose dolls I used to demolish, and who now holds bald-headed statesmen and pert young pamphleteers in her chains! Who knows but, if your sad bereavement had not taken you so inopportunately away, my friend Charles Turberville might not have become my cousin, instead of my brother-in-law!"

"Mr. Turberville is really then to be married to Carry Horsford?"

"If his parents can be brought to consent, which is still doubtful. *They* do not transfer their affections so readily as their son; and cannot be made to believe, like Charles, that one pretty face is as good as another."

"Mr. Turberville was at Cleveland's, I believe, last spring?"

"He is there now,—or I should not be here. The adulation paid by the whole family to

his thousands a-year, drives me out of the house. You know my precious mother-in-law elect, Tiny, and can therefore appreciate the amount of soft sawder lavished on poor Charley."

"I have heard her speak of *you*, Arthur, in terms of the most extravagant praise."

"An age ago, I'm afraid, while she still fancied me entitled to the possession of Heckington; which, as the most considerable place of her neighbourhood, she magnified into a sort of Chatsworth. But it has long played second fiddle to Turberville Abbey, and is often out of tune. Every dog has his day."

His tone was bitter. Bitter had probably been the experience that prompted his remarks. But Miss Corbet, still resenting against him the wrongs of his brother, could not enter into the petty annoyances under which he was smarting.

"So I came to refresh myself among the

woods and waters which alone entitle me to think myself somewhat bigger than a midge's wing," he resumed; though unencouraged by a word of reply. "As I was gradually shrinking into nothing at Cleveland's, I saved myself from utter evaporation by a brisk walk across the fields, and a glimpse of Heckington."

"And has the remedy succeeded?" inquired Tiny; though the rain, still dashing against the windows, suggested that it was taken at an inauspicious moment.

"Perfectly. I am twice the man I was when I leapt over the hedge from Barnley Lane, and stole like a thief into the premises. Memorials of four centuries of Rawdons are calculated to put me into conceit with myself; though their faces are torn, and their effigies somewhat mouldy. We beat the Turbervilles, Tiny, by a long chalk!—No hook-nosed, Nineveh-eyed visages among *our* forefathers!"

"If we could only leave off thinking and boasting of them!—"

"Let me think and boast, then, of the living cousin I have found at Heckington, of whom I have equal reason to be proud"—

"Because she is more patient than in the days when you broke her toys, and rooted up her garden?"

"Because she is so different from all I have been seeing lately. In former days, Tiny, when Cleveland's was on its knees to me, and I was so glad in my Eton holidays to escape from the cheerless home where my mother and those confounded janissaries of hers used to dole out my pleasures as if I were a pauper at a Union, and they the Master and Matron,—the Horsfords appeared angels on earth. But somehow or other, that tumble of mine from the cliff at Interlaken, and the long illness that ensued, shook my perceptions into a new shape. I no longer see things as I used, or feel them as I used. Everything at

Clevelands *now* appears gaudy, shifting, paltry, like the bits of coloured glass so brilliant in a kaleidoscope, which are still but bits of broken glass."

"But did you expect the optical delusion which created a mosaic of emeralds and rubies vying with the gems in Aladdin's magic window, would last for ever?" said Tiny, with a smile.

"I *expected* nothing ; which constitutes, I suppose, that bliss of school-boyhood to which old creatures like Armstead and Barton Frere recur so yearningly. I was simply as happy as a sandboy ; and before I came to my sober senses, Tiny, had bartered my birth-right for a mess of pottage ;—yes—pledged, in exchange for those worthless bits of glass, the happiness of my future life.—Unequal stakes !—"

"I am not sure that I ought to listen to you," interrupted his cousin. "When the weather clears up, you may repent these con-

fessions. You are in a misanthropic mood just now, because the mercury is low."

"You fancy that when Florence is my wife, I shall like you the less for having confided to you my contempt for the Horsfords? No, no! I shall never confound *her* with the rest of them; not from any vast superiority in her nature, but because she is and must be my own. That, Tiny, is irrevocable. Yonder knights in armour, or prim gentlemen in velvet doublets," he continued, pointing to his Rawdon ancestry, "would disown me for a descendant, if I played fast and loose with a pledge voluntarily given and often renewed."

"Then say no more of it, or *her*!" said Miss Corbet, earnestly.

"Only this—that, as regards such matters as hanging, or marriage, I am as complete a fatalist as a Turk. I have no doubt that, from all time, Flo. and I were destined to each other. And though to you, my kinswoman, —my all but nearest relation on earth,—I

describe my boyish entanglement without any flowers of rhetoric, I am still what is called in love. The sweet face which at sixteen I worshipped as that of an angel, I still at two-and-twenty consider the prettiest in the world; and some day or other, perhaps, when we have escaped from Clevelands, I may learn to love my wife as I once loved my love. Don't fix your sedate eyes so gravely on me, Tiny, or I shall fancy you are weighing my sins in the balance!"

What Miss Corbet was really weighing in the balance, was the strange likeness, and still stranger dissimilarity, between Arthur and his brother—"alike, but oh, how different!" And in what did the difference consist?—The physical resemblance was remarkable. In frank recklessness of speech, they seemed to vie with each other. She must see more of Arthur before she could decide on the comparative value of their intellectual endowments. She fancied,—she was *almost* sure,



that she should never like him so well as poor Willy!—

Meanwhile they were agreeably apprised by the receding uproar of the storm, and the sunshine gleaming between the crevices of the shutters, that the weather was clearing. Hastily throwing open the window, they readmitted at once the light of day and the exquisite fragrance of the freshened atmosphere.

“I don’t believe the flowers in those old-fashioned parterres have been renewed or weeded, since the days when we used to get into disgrace by scampering over them together,” said Arthur, as, kneeling on the window-seat, he leant out to enjoy the scene so fraught with boyish reminiscences.

“If you want to see a well-kept garden, walk with me to Northover, and accept a late luncheon or early dinner,” said his cousin.

“Not to-day, Tiny. I must hurry back to Cleveland, or they will fancy me drowned in

the storm. But now that you have admitted me—(may I not hope so?)—into cousinly favour, you must invite me over, some day soon, to dine and sleep, that I may make acquaintance with my uncle Corbet.”

Before she could remonstrate, he was gone; and when reflecting, some hours afterwards, in her cheerful, quiet, sitting-room, over the strange events of the morning, she deeply regretted that she had not *insisted* on his visiting Northover, and breaking bread under her father's roof. The opportunity might not recur; and in dealing with people so uncertain as the Enmores, it was dangerous to miss the tide.

## CHAPTER IV.

A few days afterwards, there arrived at Northover, addressed to Miss Corbet, a pianoforte, whose tone and case did credit to the selection of the anonymous donor.

The welcome gift was at first ascribed to Lucretia. But poor Tiny's thanks were indignantly resented.

"You well know," she wrote, "that I would sooner hear the house-dog howl than listen to the best music which misses and pianofortes

ever conspired to inflict upon society. You must flatter yourselves you are clear of my company for the remnant of my days, to fancy I would incur the risk of having my quiet evenings spoiled by the tinkling of cymbals. Perhaps, my dear child, as my cousin Jane don't choose to have you for a daughter-in-law, or even for an inmate, she may have been seized with a fit of compunctious generosity?—Write and ask."

Mrs. Enmore, however, resented the imputation quite as stiffly as Lucretia; and Tiny, regretting to have prematurely expressed gratitude where all pretension to it was so ungraciously disavowed, resolved to wait till the real donor was discovered. Secretly, very secretly, she trusted that the instrument might have been sent by order of that absent cousin by whom her taste for music had been stimulated and perfected. She had often described to Willy the jangling old piano at Grenfield House; and perhaps, from his

distant home, he had taken thought for its replacement.

The apathy of her father on the occasion was almost provoking.

“The piano was, doubtless, a present from some member of her mother’s family.—What signified which?”

But though easy enough on most points, he could be obstinate as a mule when he chose ; and nothing would persuade him to take his daughter to call at Cleveland’s. “He would not court the acquaintance of a jackanapes like Arthur Rawdon.”

Just as he was making the declaration, however, in walked the jackanapes in person ; accosting the confused interlocutors as “uncle,” and “cousin,” and establishing himself between them as if a daily frequenter of the house.

To such friendly cordiality, Henry Corbet, who was prepared to oppose dignity with dignity, and resent the resentment with which

he supposed young Rawdon likely to regard an interloper on his property, opened his heart without reserve. Nothing could be more agreeable to him or more conducive to the discharge of his duties, than to be on good terms with the heir-at-law. Though he held his appointment exclusively from the Court of Chancery, he thought it only just that young Rawdon should enjoy his share of whatever sport Heckington was able to afford. After a prolonged walk together over the farm, during which Arthur submitted to be instructed in a thousand details he did not care to learn, the uncle and nephew began to fit each other like hand and glove.

"I did not take the trouble of riding here this fiery morning, my dear Tiny, only to ask you how you liked your piano, and to tell you at what period Broadwood's tuner is to make his appearance," said he to his cousin, on his return. "As Mrs. Horsford was about to despatch a messenger to Northover with

some sort of invitation, I offered her my services."

That the invitation was contained in one of Mrs. Horsford's flumming notes, abounding in superlatives, scored and double-scored, and forestalling all possible excuses, he did not think it necessary to add. Mr. and Mrs. Corbet were entreated to come in their pony-trap and dress at Clevelands; "or Mrs. H. would have the *very greatest* pleasure in sending the close carriage for them, if the weather proved unsettled or either of them happened to be indisposed."

Tiny, who felt certain that her father would feel greater than the "greatest pleasure" in staying at home, was no little amazed when he suggested immediate acceptance. The truth was, that he was delighted with the idea of the prospect of meeting on convivial terms the cheerful young nephew to whom he had taken so great a fancy.—A pleasant surprise to his daughter, — who wanted to hear of

Amy and her child, and to talk over with Mr. Turberville their pleasant days at Higham Grange.

"I shall be all the better received on my return," said Arthur, in taking leave, "for having succeeded in coaxing you out of your cell."

But to emerge from that sober cell, after six months' seclusion, into the gaudy saloons of Clevelands, served painfully to attest the aptness of her cousin's remark concerning the kaleidoscope and the fragments of glittering glass. Florence and Carry with their pretty pink-and-white cheeks, bright eyes, and elaborately braided hair, their elastic gait, high-pitched voices, and gossamer dresses, looked like a couple of butterflies poised on the fine flowers of the conservatory. In her plain black dress she felt almost out of place among those "gay creatures of the elements that in the colours of the rainbow lived."

Yet the approving smiles of her father and



cousin ought to have satisfied her that she was not very much amiss. Her quiet manners, graceful deportment, and delicate features, gained more advantage than she was aware of, from contrast with those restless, conscious, belles.

A person content to be sought, and equally well satisfied to be neglected, is always a satisfactory relief.

"If you only knew, dearest Tiny," cried one of the pretty butterflies, "how much you were missed this season in London!—Not so much by Amy. Amy is now a fixture in her nursery,—(where another little cradle is preparing for the end of the autumn!) Poor Amy thinks of nothing but teeth-cutting and red gum—It was rather Sir James who deplored your absence; in the interest of those solemn friends, to whom your sober habits were so acceptable."

"But it was not alone in Park Lane you were inquired after, my dearest girl," inter-

posed Mrs. Horsford, afraid she might not be satisfied with so modified a compliment. "Lady Harriet Singleton, to whose ball you accompanied my daughter Armstead last year, was full of inquiries, when she sent out her cards this season, concerning our charming young friend, and where she was to forward her invitation."

"Had I been in town, my mourning would have prevented my profiting by her kindness," said Miss Corbet.

"In London, my dear, you could scarcely have kept it on for so unusual a length of time. Family mournings, like family prayers, have been abridged of half their tediousness by Court example."

Miss Corbet made no rejoinder. Even in London, she should have grudged no mark of respect to the memory of her excellent step-mother.

Meanwhile it was no small improvement to the society at Cleveland, that the family circle

was curtailed, like family mournings, by the absence of the three noisy, flippanant sons. Dick had joined his regiment,—Clement was at Oxford in place of Bob,—who had recently been recorded in one of the “CIVIL APPOINTMENTS” paragraphs of the *Observer* newspaper, as salaried in some select Downing Street corporation, in which there was every prospect of his tontining, in the course of the next quarter of a century, into the official preciseness and mental and corporeal baldness of a Barton Frere. As he could neither write a legible hand, nor affirm on his own knowledge that two and two did not make half-a-dozen, he had been appointed Under Secretary to some board, of whose “offending” against public opinion and common-sense, a distant Right Honourable cousin of Mrs. Horsford was the “head and front.”

To Tiny, his extradition from the county afforded considerable relief. She had learned from Willy to regard him as the evil genius of

his brother; and his absence partly accounted to her for the scales having so suddenly fallen from the eyes of Arthur Rawdon.

“You mustn’t suppose, my dear young friend,” observed Mrs. Horsford, as the ladies were wandering together after dinner on the lawn, “that because you see Mr. Rawdon of Heckington domesticated among us, his prospects are brightening; that dreadful mother of his, my dear, is as obdurate as ever! Though one would imagine that her risk of losing, last summer, so promising a son would have opened her eyes to his value, and disposed her to condescend to his happy establishment in life, she has become more savage than ever:—pretending that poor Bob was the cause of the accident, and that—no matter what. And that odious sugar-merchant of a brother, in the West Indies, is just as wicked about it. I did not myself see Mrs. Enmore this year; for she has evidently taken precautions against an interview that might force

her to listen to reason. But I had some conversation with that crack-brained Miss Rawdon, and gathered from *her* that her cousin Jane would never contribute a shilling to promote her son's marriage; and that there was not a 'girl in England,' (with the exception always of yourself,) whom she would not prefer as a daughter-in-law to my daughter Florence."

To reply to these animadversions was difficult. Miss Corbet took refuge in observing that Florence and Carry were still so young, that their mother must congratulate herself on the prospect of retaining them at home a little longer.

Mrs. Horsford's exultation in the prospect seemed, however, far from ecstatic; and it was perhaps to punish her guest for a compliment she suspected to be ironical, that she inquired whether the news of Carry's engagement to dear Charles Turberville had not greatly surprised her?—

“Far from it,” was Tiny’s candid reply. “The moment I heard of her arrival at Higham Grange, I thought nothing more likely.”

Again, the sweetspoken lady was a little in doubt whether, in spite of the candid smile of poor Tiny, her reply might not conceal a sarcasm.—But she had no intention of falling out with any niece of Arthur’s mother; above all, just then,—when she was intent on making a party to Heckington, lest Charles Turberville should be led to suppose that his Abbey was the only family-seat on which the Horsfords were likely to be engrafted.

“I was thinking, my dear love,” said she, finding no proposal that way tending, proceed from Miss Corbet—“that it would be a charming thing, now the days are so long and the weather so delicious, to make up a little picnic at Heckington,—in the park under the trees,—or in the Hall itself,—or——”

“At Northover, rather; where, if you will accept a luncheon, you could spend the rest of

the day in Heckington Park.—My father, considering his engagements with the Court of Chancery, is scrupulous about making use of the Hall.”

“But, with Arthur of the party, my dearest love, what could possibly be the objection?”

“*That* point, papa and my cousin must decide. On my own part, I promise tongue, chicken, and sherry, for as many as you will be kind enough to bring, whenever you feel inclined to accept it.”

Though this was not exactly what Mrs. Horsford intended, her project being to give a *dejeuner à la fourchette* at the Hall, to two or three leading families of the neighbourhood, at which the Corbets, if not actually suppressed, were to be let down as low as possible, she was forced to give a smiling assent. On further reference to Arthur and Mr. Corbet, an early day was fixed. They were to ride and drive over in twos and threes, according to the caprice of the lovers ; take an early dinner

under the beech-trees, if the weather were propitious, or retreat into covert at Northover, if it boded rain—the usual doom of *al fresco* parties in our succulent climate.

A great event to Tiny:—the first time it had fallen to her share to do the honours of even so modest an entertainment!—A neighbour or two to dinner at Grenfield House, had formed the utmost limit of hospitality compatible with her father's hitherto straitened means. It seemed strange that the first time she was called upon to preside over his table, should be to feast the son of Reginald Enmore!

Though far from of a suspicious nature, she saw, or fancied she saw, that neither Florence nor Caroline Horsford was altogether pleased at the deference shown her by their affianced lovers. Charles Turberville, a kind-hearted being, attributing her paleness and thinness to the black dress she was wearing, and the family affliction with which it was connected,



treated her with grave respect ; while Arthur was full of affectionate consideration, lest he should appear to the flighty Horsfords to disregard one whom, among themselves, they reckoned, in their private summings up, in the list of his poor relations.

But in the course of the evening that succeeded the Clevelands dinner, it required no great exercise of perspicuity to perceive that the two young couples were less in conceit with each other, than at its commencement.—Like all artificial people, the Horsfords fell occasionally off their stilts, or lapsed into their natural notes.

“ *Of course* they would come early,” Florence had observed, in exchanging “ good-night ” with the Corbets. “ Arthur would take care that they came early. No fear of their being late *at Northover*, if Mr. Rawdon were of the party.”

Caroline, on the other hand, flounced off into the conservatory, begging poor Charley would

make his own arrangements for the projected riding party, without reference to *her*.

“ Perhaps she might not ride at all. Riding in a broiling sun, on a high road, was detestable ; and there were no green lanes,—no anything that was pleasant,—between Clevelands and Heckington.”

The admiration previously entertained by both young men of Miss Corbet’s gentle manners and conciliating disposition, was certainly not diminished by comparison with these ebullitions of temper. But it was clear to poor Tiny that she must keep a careful watch over her conduct ; lest some thoughtless inadvertence should seem to justify the jealousy of these pettish girls.

Only two days were to elapse for preparation. But she was too ladylike to be fussy. The simple repast she had offered, was all she meant to provide. A few cold dishes, salads and fruits, calculated to be served—

“ In the cool shade, with cloth on herbage laid.”

Had the Lady Sophias or Honourable Misses whom it had been Mrs. Horsford's hope to include in the party, really joined them at Northover, they would probably have been a little disappointed.—But the garden fruits of Heckington that were to crown the feast, were, as in most old-fashioned houses, of first-rate excellence ; and, a little to Miss Corbet's mortification, there arrived in the interim, from Gunter's, a box of exquisite confectionery, which she was inclined to resent as an affront, till she remembered that the offering of these beautiful bonbons was made by Arthur, not to the quiet cousin he had named Placidia, but to the vivacious lady of his love.

In addition to the Cleveland half-dozen, each so important in his or her own conceit that they seemed to constitute double the number, the Horsfords had invited and brought with them a pair of little quiet neighbours, a Mr. and Mrs. William Hart-

land of Shrublands ;—people so colourless and insignificant, that they could be inserted any where, certain to harmonise with every body ; a sort of universally-available sawdust to prevent other elements of a party from jarring. The William Hartlands consequently received twice as many invitations, and partook of twice as many turbot and saddles-of-mutton, as the most popular people in the county.

On the present occasion, perhaps, Mrs. Horsford surmised that the presence of strangers might be a restraint on the somewhat too frequent retorts of her daughters ; who were growing a little peevish at seeing their wedding-favours, and diamond-hoops, receding before them like a mirage. And as Heckington Hall had been shut up ever since the establishment of the Hartlands in the neighbourhood, there was some pretext for saying to them—“ Come and see the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. The agent’s family will provide us with refreshments.”

To Miss Corbet, unaware of the motives of Mrs. Horsford, or the *status* of her *protégés* as "walking lady and gentleman," in all the processions and pantomimes of the landed gentry of twelve adjacent parishes, the sight of a showy little stranger in a lace bonnet and muslin dress, spangled like the nest of a bower-bird with ribbon-loops and coloured bows, *ad infinitum*, was somewhat alarming. But she soon found that Mrs. William Hartland and her finery, if a little out of place, was no greater *gêne* on the party than one of the linnets chirping over their heads; and of infinite use in supplying admiring interjections when they made the tour of a house, whose utmost beauties scarcely warranted exclamations of "oh!" or "ah!"

To Florence, indeed, who saw, in both house and furniture, only what she should hereafter reform or exterminate, even the ugliness of the spot possessed an interest. But Mrs. Horsford, with all her complimentary

fluency, found it difficult to supply the proper amount of enthusiasm when she beheld the utter uninhabitableness of the place in its present condition :—furniture *entre deux ages*, old-fashioned without being venerable ; to say nothing of a total want of accommodation for a pernicious class of the community invented by the present century, and denominated upper servants, although no servants at all.—The Clevelands housekeeper and butler would not have put up for a day with a servants' hall having a stone floor ; or the light closet of a steward's room, which had so long served the need of Heckington.

By degrees, that she might be at liberty to signify these mother-in-lawish contempts to Charles Turberville and his future wife, without offending the pride of Arthur Rawdon, she detained them and the Hartlands by her side to criticise the hangings and scrutinise the pictures ; while Miss Corbet and her cousin rambled on through the rooms,—peopled for

*them* with the absent and the dead, and a thousand ancestral traditions.—They were, in fact, alone with the past: the two fathers having glided off unobserved to visit a part of the establishment dearer to a Paterfamilias than saloon or picture-gallery: namely, its stables and kennels.

“But where is Florence?” inquired Miss Corbet,—stopping short, after ascending the square old oaken staircase, as they reached the lobby of what were called the Tapestry-rooms, sacred to the habitation of the heads of the family.

“Never mind her,—Florence is miles behind us.”

“Then let us wait here till she arrives.”

“At all events, sit down and rest. Florence, I will answer for it, is still in the yellow-saloon, measuring in her mind’s eye the number of ells of Lyons silk that must be ordered from Paris, to place that stronghold of grandmamma Rawdon’s pride in presentable array. Don’t

sigh, Placidia ! If you live long enough to see us installed here, you will not find a rag of the old Rawdon trumpery left in its place ;—scarcely, perhaps, one brick left upon another !”

Placidia now sighed in right earnest.

“One knows that every step of Progress, is what is called in the right direction,” said she, endeavouring to look less grave than she felt. “Still, it is the weakness of human nature, from the days of Lot’s wife, to look backward ; a conservative instinct, I suppose, implanted in our nature, lest things should be too suddenly overthrown. You might make Heckington as rich and comfortable as Turberville Abbey, Arthur, or as gay and bright as Clevelands, and I should still regret this faded tapestry, and the dim old leather-hangings of the library.”

“But you, dearest, are a creature apart. *You* have not been vulgarised by the banalities of modern education. I remember that dear old governess of yours, Tiny, with her



starched cap, and starched mind, teaching you geography with ivory-counters, 'after the method, young gentleman,' (she used to say) 'of the celebrated Abbé Gauthier ;' and who knew about as much of the grimaces of fashionable deportment, or the surfaceism of the great world, as I of the ruined cities of Mexico!— And it follows, that Placidia remains true to the wisdom and mildewed furniture of her ancestors; to which creed, dear cousin, you will find me ever ready to respond, Amen."

"There are some other articles of faith, Atty," said she, shaking her head, "to which I would much rather find you true——"

"Such as——"

"A belief that the absent are not *always* in the wrong."

"By the absent, meaning of course, the young gentleman who is crushing sugar-canes at Fredville?"

"By the absent, meaning my dear cousin Willy, your only brother."

"Had she omitted the word 'dear,' the fair Placidia might perhaps have heard me utter a second Amen."

"Still, jealous of that poor fellow!"—

"Still, both jealous and envious!—I own it, Tiny. I don't glory in it, however. I know it to be mean and paltry. But I can't forgive him for having been preferred to me by father, mother, and cousin. My father hated me from the moment I became Rawdon of Heckington. My mother took me *en grippe* from the moment I was withdrawn from her tyranny by my intimacy with the Horsfords. I know I have told you all this before. Don't be impatient. Don't let your love for Willy disturb the evenness of that serene little nature. But some day, in the solitude of your chamber,—or rather in the solitude of the old beech-grove yonder, which I dare say is twice as tranquil,—ask yourself whether it can be expected of a fiery Creole of twenty-two, to forgive the person who has been

rendered independent at his expense, and is rolling in riches, while *my* fortune is doled out to me by the grudging hand of the law in such miserable dribblets, that I cannot even fulfil my engagements as an honourable man."

"I am certain that the solitude of either my chamber or the beech-grove would never make me fancy you a victim, because your father chose to bequeath his property to his younger son. Why *I* have as much pretence for hating *you*, Atty, because my grandfather preferred you to myself to inherit Heckington!—I was the only child of his eldest child."—

Arthur Enmore started.—In that light, the question had not before presented itself to his mind. As a matter of equity, he felt that Tiny was better entitled than himself.

"I will believe, and do, anything you wish,"—said he, in a less assured tone than usual.

"Then write by the next mail to Willy, and sign yourself his affectionate brother. It is not much to ask ; and nothing in this world would make him half so happy. To him, silver and gold, houses and lands, are as nothing, compared with the love you withhold from him."

Again, Arthur Rawdon started. Had this younger brother of his—this *favoured* younger brother,—indeed the advantage over him in nobleness of soul?—

"Or if you object to so decided a step," resumed Miss Corbet, — misinterpreting his hesitation,—“add a postscript to the letter. I am about to write him. I mean to give him an account of our party here to-day, and tell him how well both his brother and Heckington were looking.”

Arthur answered not a word. But when Placidia turned towards him, she saw tears in his eyes.

“Do you remember, Tiny,” said he, after

a short pause, "one day when we were all children, a miserable robin, which had found its way into this gallery, flitting up and down, pursued by Willy and me with our battledores, uttering pitiful little cries : while you stood by, weeping bitterly, and upbraiding us with our cruelty ?"

Miss Corbet tried in vain to recollect the incident. Those cousins of hers, had been guilty of so *many* cruel actions !—

"Just as you looked that day, you look now. The girl was mother to the woman ;—always timid, always compassionate, always protecting the weaker side. My grandmother Rawdon, on that occasion, disturbed by our noise, stalked out of her dressing-room, and scolded you into bits for what she called ' romping with the boys : ' an injustice which you bore in silence,—patient as an angel. And now, those noisy women, whom I hear approaching, will probably be equally unjust, and accuse you of whispering in corners with

one of the boys. Bear with *them* as patiently as you did with the old lady, dear Tiny, in gratitude for having prevailed.—Here's my hand upon it!—I *will* write to Willy. I will even own to him that I have been greatly in fault.—Are you satisfied?"—

So satisfied was she, and so fondly did her brightened countenance attest her joy, that there was some little pretext for the change of colour in that of Florence Horsford, when she suddenly came upon them as they rose from the ottoman to await the approaching party. Startled and indignant, so far from confiding to them as she had intended, that she thought the yellow-room would look divine, furnished with seagreen silk and an Aubusson carpet of the moss pattern, she proceeded in sullen silence along the gallery ;—turning a deaf ear to poor Tiny's recapitulation of certain family anecdotes which she had learned from Lucretia Rawdon, concerning the Nankin jars and agate cups,—monsters in crackled porcelain, and shepherd-

esses worked in faded crewels,—by which it was adorned.

She had a great deal to drive from her thoughts before she could again occupy them with the history of Heckington.

## CHAPTER V.

THE tour of the house was, like most such sight-seeing expeditions, especially when there are no *chefs-d'œuvres* of art to be admired and blundered about, eminently unsuccessful. The weather was oppressive, the party weary and hungry ; having exhausted their commonplace small-talk, and possessing nothing better in reserve.

It was a relief to all when, at the bottom of the stairs, they found awaiting them the cheery



faces of Mr. Corbet and Mr. Horsford ; with little Mr. William Hartland, who looked like sixpence added to the two shillings of their half-crown,—announcing the welcome intelligence that their collation awaited them in the shade.

After dragging through the afternoon sunshine to the spot, they threw themselves languidly on the fresh herbage, which had been carefully mown and rolled for their use ; and contemplated the well-covered, snow-white table-cloth, as though it promised a banquet for the gods. Bright goblets and cool drinks were deposited within reach ; and by the time they had eaten and drunk, and drunk till they were ready to eat again, even the crossest individual of the party felt considerably more in charity with his fellow-creatures.

The middle-aged gentlemen were clear in their opinion, (and in the opinion of the young ones, somewhat prolix in their exposition of it),

that whatever might be the shortcomings of the old Hall, the outbuildings were superlative; while Charley Turberville honestly admitted that several of the oaks within view were as fine as the finest in Somersetshire.

Little Mrs. William Hartland lisped her smiling attestation of both assertions.

“Capital barns, certainly,—the noblest oaks she ever beheld.”

Mrs. Horsford, on the other hand, who had been so unnaturally deprived of her dues and prerogative as a mother-in-law, by the dignified husband of her first-born, glanced fondly from Florence and Arthur to the façade of the Hall; and began to regard it, through the medium of several glasses of sherry, as a very comfortable home for her old age.

It was only Tiny, who, in despite of chicken and strawberries, still felt dispirited. It was a lovely evening. The shadows were lengthening,—the rooks cawing their way home-

wards,—the birds piping up that mellow, thankful, even-song, so much better intoned than our own; and the season and scene were so pure and delightful, that she felt as if she wanted to enjoy them in more congenial company. The hollow mirth of the Horsfords, and servile echoes added by the Hartlands, wearied her spirit. She longed for a ramble under the trees, either alone, or with her cousin; that they might talk over the past and the absent. Above all, she wished something definitive to be settled concerning the olive branch about to be despatched to Fredville.

The dinner had passed off without a fault; succeeded by an exquisite dessert, with the usual accompaniment of detonating bonbons, and feminine affectations. Recalled by these associations to the memory of many a former picnic, Mrs. Horsford suggested a little music. Her daughters might perhaps be prevailed upon to sing a duet; for, on such occasions, they were accustomed to come provided with a

well-rehearsed notturno, or Venetian barcarolle—an impromptu *fait à loisir*, to complete their angelhood in the eyes, or rather ears, of the unsuspecting.

But on the present occasion, having nothing to gain, the young ladies proved recalcitrant.

“With the blackbirds in such excellent tune,” Florence observed, “nobody wanted music from *them*.”

Apparently nobody *did*; for Charles Turberville instantly applied to Miss Corbet for “one of those charming German ballads which used to delight their little circle at Higham Grange.”

Whereupon Mr. and Mrs. William Hartland, the Chorus for the party, who, on Mrs. Horsford’s appeal to her daughters, had warmly echoed her suggestion with “Oh! yes—pray, Miss Horsford, give us one of your sweet little duets,” now as readily contributed the “By all means, Miss Corbet,

one of those charming German ballads which used to delight the little circle at Higham Grange."

Tiny was thankful that her father had disappeared from the group, to order their coffee despatched from Northover ; for had *he* requested her to sing, she must have complied. It was a rule of her life, never to disobey her father.

As it was, she ventured to plead fatigue.

"We had far better take a ramble in the shrubberies, while coffee is preparing," said she. "The dew is beginning to rise, and everything is so fresh and fragrant."

"No, no, Tiny ;—no pretexts—no evasions!" cried Arthur Rawdon, who, because he had been persuaded into doing what he had long known it was his duty to do, was in the highest spirits.—"We won't let you off ;—we can't let you off. Tiny, you must, and shall. I have a right to your obedience to-day, dear Tiny. You know I have. You owe

me a sacrifice worth half-a-dozen German ballads. I *won't* be refused !”

Of the whole party who had just risen from their seats on the grass, every eye was upon her.

“I am sure you will kindly favour us, and oblige your cousin, my dear Miss Corbet,” said Mrs. William Hartland.

“I am sure you will kindly favour us, my dear Miss Corbet, and oblige your cousin,” echoed her little husband.

“But what is John bringing this way in such double quick-time ?” inquired Mr. Horsford, as one of his servants was seen hurrying with rapid strides towards the beech-grove. “He does not often trouble himself to go such a pace.”

“He has a letter in his hand,” observed Charley Turberville, carelessly.

“Let us hope that Clevelands is not in flames. Or it is probably a telegraphic message.”

“ Good Heavens ! Something may be amiss with Amy or her little girl ! ” exclaimed Florence, really alarmed. “ Pray, pray, Arthur, run and meet him. ”

The footman, however, perceiving that he was observed, quickened his already rapid pace. And it proved that, though brought by Mr. Horsford’s servant, the despatch was addressed to Miss Corbet.

“ As it came by express, ma’am, to North-over, and no one was in the way to bring it on, I thought no time ought to be lost. ”

Tiny had no ears to lend to his explanation. The letter was in Lucretia Rawdon’s handwriting ; and it must have needed some important exigency to determine *her* to send a letter by express. She tore the letter hastily open. Her visitors seemed uncertain whether they ought to leave her to herself for the decipherment of its contents : the more so, when they saw that, after a first start of surprise, her colour, as she read on, went

and came ; till deserting her altogether, her terror - stricken face became ghastly as death.

Mrs. Horsford, always officious, made a move to come forward to her assistance. But after a moment, a piteous cry burst from the depths of her heart ;—and looking round in desperation, with the letter, still half unread, in her hand, she rushed into the arms of her cousin Arthur,—clasped her own round his neck,—and in an agony of tears, concealed her face in his bosom !—

The amazed spectators scarcely knew whether to sympathise, or be shocked at this passionate outbreak ; though it was, perhaps, only Florence who noticed how affectionately the embrace was reciprocated. All, however, could see that, after a few convulsive sobs, the clasp of the poor sufferer suddenly relaxed. Her arms fell lifeless ; and in a state of total insensibility she would have sunk to the ground, but that she was resolutely sustained by the agi-



tated Arthur, who called loudly on his friend Turberville to assist in bearing her to the house.

Great was the trial to Mrs. Horsford, who had darted forward to pick up the momentous letter which had fallen from poor Tiny's hand, that the presence of the Hartlands, for once in their lives in the way, prevented her from casting an eye over its contents. The distress by which Miss Corbet was so strangely overcome, could not be of a pecuniary nature; or the missive would have been addressed to her father.—Who was dead?—Who was ill?—If it should only prove to be the savage aunt and mother in May Fair!

Slowly, however, and with decent propriety, she and the rest of the party followed the two young men and their lifeless burthen towards the Hall; as being nearer than Northover to the spot where they had dined. But even when they arrived there, the eyes of Miss Corbet were still closed,—her hands still icy

cold. It was no common fainting fit. Her father and her female-attendant were already sent for; and Dr. Ashe was anxiously hinted at by the Hartlands.

“If you were to take a look at the letter?” suggested Mrs. Horsford, in a very low voice to her future son-in-law,—placing it open in his hand.—And Arthur, who regarded the pale beautiful girl he had just placed upon a sofa, as his sister, his life, his better self,—did not hesitate. Nothing that afflicted Tiny, but he had a right to claim as an affliction to himself.—

Little did he suspect how great a one!—It was already too late for his intended letter to Fredville.—Willy was gone!—Rawdon of Heckington was brotherless!—

No one who witnessed the effect of his slight glance at the letter, could doubt how dearly its contents involved his happiness. But Arthur had sufficient mastery over himself to utter no exclamation that betrayed the

stress upon his feelings. Hurrying out of the room, with the letter in his hand, he left them to develop the mystery by a thousand foolish suppositions; while he gave way, in a distant solitary chamber, not only to the anguish of bereavement, but to the pangs of remorse.

Lucretia's letter was written from his mother's house. To Mrs. Enmore, the death of her son had been formally communicated by Messrs. Harman of Spanish Town, her husband's executors; who, during the minority of her son, had officiated as his agents. They wrote in haste; and all details were reserved for the following mail.

"I should have come down to you myself, my dear child, to break this terrible intelligence," wrote Lucretia. "But I can't leave poor Jane. Jane is more to be pitied than yourself; for *she* parted from her son in anger; and has never written him a line since

his departure. Her self-upbraidings are indeed afflicting. Perhaps because she is so little apt to betray her feelings. I don't know that I ever heard her speak out before. My dear Tiny, the moment I hear another syllable on the subject, I will write again. But a fortnight must first elapse. After all, *what* can we learn? That we have lost him! We can't unlearn *that*. Your aunt's first thought, on receiving the news, was to send for me,—as one who had loved him in life, and would lament him in death.—And when the shock of meeting was over, she bad me instantly send off an express to *you*—'poor Willy's Tiny.'—I should have done so, my dear, without her instructions. She said not a word about writing to Arthur. Most likely she don't know his address. Or perhaps she resents his barbarous conduct to his poor brother. But where's the use of perpetuating grievances! Let us rather bow our heads to the decree of the Almighty which has taken

him from us, and endeavour to love better those you are left behind.

“Write, therefore, please, to Mr. Rawdon; and let him know that his brother William expired at Fredville, on the 8th of June.—This is all we know at present about the matter. And so, God bless and comfort you, my poor child, prays your afflicted cousin,

“LUCRETIA R.”

Long before Miss Corbet revived sufficiently to explain to her father, who was now kneeling by her side, the cause of her deep distress, the agitation of Mrs. Horsford was nearly equal to that of the real mourners. She had ascertained from the servant by whom Mr. Corbet was fetched to the hall, that Arthur was already gone; that he had rushed to Northover, mounted Mr. Horsford's mare,—and ridden away at full speed,—no one knew whither:—carrying with him probably the fatal letter which had caused so much dis-

turbance. How was she to come at the facts of the case?—Whom had they lost?—What had they lost?—Or perhaps what had they gained?—

To say that her maternal foresight did not glance at the probability that Mrs. Enmore had made a sudden exit,—Mrs. Enmore, who stood like a Picts' wall between Arthur and Heckington,—between her daughter and Arthur,—would be to do her injustice. But even when poor Tiny's few faltered words to her sympathising father disclosed the truth, and elicited from Mr. Corbet exclamations of "Poor Willy,—such a fine young fellow!—In the flower of manhood!—What a sad blow for them all,"—though the advantage was of a minor degree, she assumed the sort of downcast, family-affliction countenance, which seemed due to the occasion :—a death, namely, which conferred a large fortune on the only member of the Enmore family in whom she felt an interest.

In a voice appropriately subdued, she begged Charles Turberville to hasten their preparations for departure. "Mr. Corbet and his daughter would be glad to be alone. They should of course find poor dear Arthur at Cleveland. His frantic grief had doubtless impelled him to hurry home."

On the fortnight of suspense that followed this grievous blow, so trying both to Arthur and his cousin, it would be needlessly painful to dwell. Though the worst was certain—though nothing could palliate or alter that irrevocable word—*dead*—to those who loved poor Willy Enmore, their total ignorance concerning the origin and manner of his death was a terrible aggravation.

The first impulse of Arthur on quitting Heckington was to hasten to his mother. But the harsh truths which, according to Lucretia Rawdon's account of the turn her sorrow was taking, were likely to assail his ears, would be more than he could bear. He had

not courage, however, to remain at Clevelands. Not because his affliction was underrated; but because Mrs. Horsford beset him from morning till night with condolences and sympathies to the full value of the four thousand per annum to which he had succeeded. He would almost rather have seen the Clevelands party pursue their usual routine of noisy frivolity, than assume a sudden grimace of sensibility whenever he made his appearance; a grimace as little accordant with the real expression of their feelings, as the tragic or comic masks worn by comedians of old.

After a few days of the decent restraint which at first Mrs. Horsford placed upon her curiosity, and she began to indulge in hints and questions concerning his family-affairs which probed him to the quick, and utterly exhausted his patience; and having applied to Mr. Corbet for a few days' hospitality, with the cordial frankness with which he would himself have granted it, he hastened to North-



over. There, at least, he was sure of sincerity. If subjected by poor Tiny to reproaches for his past conduct, they would at least be tenderly and femininely spoken. Nor would a single sordid thought mingle with *her* sorrow or admonitions.

Till then, he had not been fully sensible of her high qualities. Till then, he had never fully appreciated the superiority of a pure and lovely nature to a pure and lovely face. The mercenary character of the whole Clevelands family was becoming nauseous. When he announced to them his intended visit "for change of air and scene," he saw at once that they mistrusted his motives. His independence being now accomplished, they decided that his first thought was his cousin; and were unwilling to let him out of their sight till something definitive was settled for the completion of his matrimonial engagements.

But as regarded the comfort to be derived from the society of his dear gentle Placidia,

his hopes and *their* apprehensions were alike superfluous. The moment she attained sufficient strength for the effort, she had obtained her father's permission to hasten to Hertford Street.—No matter whether her company were desired.—No matter whether it were even tolerated.—*There* she would remain, by the side of Willy's mother,—that they might at least weep together, and together await the details of his last moments.

## CHAPTER VI.

To enter that house again, was indeed a trial to Tiny. But though still so feeble that she was scarcely equal to the journey to town, she regretted only that she had not been more expeditious. For already, Mrs. Enmore had returned to her chronic state of taciturnity. The surface of the lava had hardened. Whatever might be the glow beneath, all that met the eye was ash-like and cold.

But though she had ceased to talk of her

sons even to Lucretia and wore her crape and bombazine as stiffly as if it had been a suit of armour, that single subject engrossed every thought of her mind. Under her unnatural formality, throbbed a heart that was all but bursting.

If she did not respond to the passionate emotion with which Miss Corbet, on entering her presence, threw herself on her knees beside her chair, and hid her face in her stately skirts, it was because, at that moment, her niece brought strangely before her mind another Sophia, whom she had seen on more than one occasion weeping at the feet of her parents. She cherished, moreover, an implacable resentment against the poor girl, for having despatched her lost Willy to Inverlaken, to be harassed and insulted by his brother.

Still, the bitter-hearted woman could not bid her, ailing as she was, return to Northover; and Tiny took possession once more of

the gloomy chamber where she was never again to be rendered watchful by the steps of her cousin, pacing the room overhead!—How dreary it all seemed!—What would she not have given for one of those cheerful lecture-provoking whistles on the stairs which used to announce his return home; or the whiff of a cigar, which betrayed his arrival. So young, so gay, so sanguine, it seemed as though he *could* not have died!

But she was alone. She must resign herself. She must stifle her grief. Every day, Lucretia stole up to her room when Mrs. Enmore had betaken herself to the two hours of sermon-reading which she called her “devotions;”—not to assist in drying her tears, but to make them flow afresh, by reference to “the one loved name!”—She had so much to tell of Willy;—so much to reveal which it was no longer treachery to betray!—

“He would have given his life for you, Tiny, my child,” said she. “It was only

his overstrained romantic generosity that prevented his endeavouring to engage your affections. He knew that his mother and grandmother had entered into some sort of family compact to marry you to Arthur; the old lady fancying it a reparation due to the memory of her daughter Sophia, that sooner or later her child should become Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington.

“But since he was aware that Arthur had positively engaged himself to Florence Horsford!”

“He fancied it a mere boyish entanglement. He thought such an alliance unworthy of his brother. That it would never come to pass, we both felt assured; for Mrs. Enmore had pledged herself, heart and soul, that it should never be. Under such circumstances, it would have been ungenerous, perhaps, to place obstacles in the way of the happier marriage awaiting Arthur Rawdon if prevailed on to renounce his foolish projects.”

"He should have considered my happiness as well as Arthur's," said Tiny in a low voice, still resting her heavy brow upon her folded hands.—"Why should he suppose that either my hand or heart was at Arthur's disposal?—He should have considered *me* as much as his brother."

"He *did*, my poor child. He thought and cared for no one else. It was to provide you with a suitable home, rather than from interest in the place, that he petitioned the Court of Chancery to appoint your father agent to the Heckington estate. Dearly did he delight in the idea of your inhabiting the spot where he had first known and loved you!"

Soothing assurances! But alas! how unequal to satisfy the craving of the eye, and ear, and heart, that so yearned to look on him again,—to hear his voice,—to press his hand,—to feel that a true staunch heart was beating in unison with her own.

"Such pains, too, as he took," added Lucretia — her eyes moistening as she went maundering on,— "to prevent your being aware of all he lavished upon you!—It went to my conscience, Tiny, to accept your thanks for that pretended gift of mine when you first settled at Northover. But how could I do otherwise than comply with the poor boy's entreaties, and accept the credit of his generosity to spare the delicacy of your feelings? We both knew that from *him* you would never accept a gift of money."

"It came then from Willy!"—exclaimed Miss Corbet, clasping her hands in deep emotion. "And that I never should have guessed it!"—

"Yet would any other than a little linnet-headed creature like yourself have supposed it possible, that even the stingiest of old maids could economise a sum of five hundred pounds, out of an income of two hundred a-year?"



more. An impersonation of the Fredville plantations arrayed in a black coat and crape hatband, haunted her imagination ; and in the round of visits, both as debtor and creditor, in an extensive neighbourhood, her masterly modulation of voice into the *sourdine* becoming the "mitigated affliction" of the family, was worthy the proprietor of a mourning-shop.

"I am happy to say that dear Arthur is as well as can be expected after such a loss," was her reply to the good-natured inquiries of Mrs. Walker, the Rectoress of her parish. "A very fine young man, ma'am ; a very *charming* young man."

"Remarkably handsome, certainly," replied Mrs. Walker, concluding dear Arthur to be the antecedent.

"I was alluding to the late Mr. William Enmore—whom I don't think you ever saw.—He will come into nearly five thousand a-year."

"I beg your pardon," said the puzzled

Rectoress, "I understood that the last mail brought news of his decease?"

"I am *now* alluding to Mr. Rawdon of Heckington. When the death of his mother places him in the enjoyment of his ancestral estate, he will be at the head of something like ten thousand a-year."

"I am truly rejoiced to hear it," rejoined the Clergyman's wife; who, knowing how much her husband managed to do for the benefit of his fellow-creatures out of five hundred, found her organs of benevolence, large as they were, inadequate to calculate the appropriation of such a mine of Christian virtue.

But it was not on Sunday-schools, or penny-clubs, but opera-boxes and diamond-tiaras Mrs. Horsford was intent. She had been defrauded by Sir James Armstead of the perquisites lawfully accruing to the mother of a young woman of fashion; and, looming in the distance, she now beheld a charming house in

Belgravia, presided over by a beautiful Mrs. Rawdon, with an airy room in the extra story reserved exclusively for "mamma."

Little did poor Arthur surmise the destiny thus projected for him, as he wandered under his fine old oaks, cursing the day which, by designating him Rawdon of Heckington, had created a barrier between him and his poor lost brother; the fine, upright, manly being, whose company and affections he had renounced, to be dragged about, tamely, in a *lasso*, by the cunning of Clevelands. "Willy must have been a noble fellow, or he would not have started off without a grain of rancour in his heart, to visit him in Switzerland! Willy must have been a noble fellow; or he would not be so loved and grieved over by his gentle, but high-minded cousin."

The only solace he found for his self-upbraidings, was in listening to Mr. Corbet's thrice-told tale of poor William's fondness for Heckington; and the desire he had manifested

to apportion a part of his income to its maintenance and improvement.

"We must try to find out all he intended to have done," Arthur would at length reply, in a tremulous voice. "Perhaps Tiny can inform us. Perhaps that old witch, Lucretia Rawdon, may know what were his fancies on the subject. We must endeavour to comply with them all. A poor reparation, my dear Mr. Corbet, a tardy reparation,—but all I have to offer."

As the time for the arrival of the West Indian mail drew near, Arthur became more and more depressed. His voice was broken, his conversation incoherent. If the expected letters were able to bring a voice from the grave, or the reproachful spectre of his brother, the prospect of their arrival could not have rendered him more nervous. But as he seemed content to roam from morning till night about the plantations and park, sometimes with a fishing-rod in his hand,—some-

times a book,—by way of announcement that he was in no want of companionship, Mr. Corbet did not apologise for neglecting none of his customary avocations on his account.

The Horsfords, however, seemed to consider that they must not relax their grasp upon him. The day before the Jamaica mail became due, they drove to Northover, on pretence of friendly enquiries respecting Miss Corbet's return from town ; and affected the utmost surprise to find Arthur still lingering at Heckington.

“ They fancied his presence must have been required by his mother. They fancied that business connected with the late melancholy event would have long ago called him away. They had been daily expecting to hear from dear Amy that he had been to visit her. In such an emergency, the advice and assistance of Sir James would be invaluable ; and of course anybody and everybody belonging to *them* would be overjoyed to be of the least

service to him." Mrs. Horsford trusted that her dear Arthur was fully aware of the affectionate part which their whole family took in his affliction.

A deep, deep quivering sigh escaped his oppressed bosom, in token, perhaps, of his consciousness how large a share that family had exercised in producing it. But he said not a word.

"At all events, when you go to town, you will consult Sir James?" persisted Mrs. Horsford, who had already written to her son-in-law bespeaking his influence in behalf of Florence, and as much information concerning the Fredville property as he was able to extort from Arthur. So little insight into the character of Sir James had she obtained from their three years' intimacy, as to imagine he would stoop to paltry manœuvres for the benefit of any mother or sister-in-law on the face of the earth!—

"I have as yet had neither leisure nor in-

clination to think of business," replied Arthur coldly. "A time will come when it must force itself on my attention—always too soon."

"At all events, my dearest Arthur, you will come and pass a day with us on your way to London?" interposed Florence, whose gay bonnet, sprinkled with roses,—pink cheeks sprinkled with dimples,—and bright eyes glancing with ill-repressed glee,—appeared to his heavy heart singularly unaccordant with his wounded feelings, and suit of sables.

"Not yet awhile, Flo. Excuse me just now. I am not fit for your gay circle. I should only be a killjoy."

"But we have no gay circle, I assure you. Mr. Turberville and Bob are gone to Goodwood."

"A little later, then, I will join you."

"But on your return from town, we shall be absent from home. We talk of going to Cowes, for the Regatta."

"Later still, then. Better for all of us

that we should wait. I am much too miserable for company."

Mrs. Horsford now broke in with her vulgar trivial common-place exhortations; explaining that it was his duty to exert himself, for his own sake, and the sake of those to whom he was dear: that tears would not restore the dead, and that it was tempting Providence to rebel against its decrees. Buzzing like a troublesome insect about his face, her silliness seemed to trifle with his sorrow. And oh! if the fools of this world would but understand how offensive appear their stale moralisings to a mind which the hand of God is preparing by some severe visitation that the seeds of Virtue and Wisdom may hereafter fructify in the soil, they would spare their shallow admonitions and useless importunities!—

On receiving no response to the well-worded phrases which she had conned, that morning, out of a work entitled "Consolation to Mourners," (which, as its black calf binding



seemed out of place in the library, was laid by among her bugle-trimmings and jet-ornaments,)—she tried, as a last resource to charm him into sociability, a long message to Tiny.

But even that attempt at conciliation proved abortive.

“If you or Florence have anything to say to her,” said he, “better write by the post. It is uncertain whether I may see my cousin. She is in Hertford Street with my mother, into whose presence I have no thoughts of intruding.”

“Not see Mrs. Enmore?” exclaimed Florence, aghast.

“And talk of *intruding* into her presence at such a crisis?” echoed her mother. “Why, it is the very moment, Arthur, to regain your influence over her mind!—Softened as she doubtless is by affliction, *now* is the nick of time to effect a reconciliation.—And I must say, you owe it to Florence to seize such an opportunity for bringing your engagement to

a happy termination. Two whole years has that poor dear girl been kept in a state of suspense, of all uncertainties the most trying to the sensitive, delicate nature of a young woman of her age ; and I do really think——”

“Be satisfied !”—interrupted Arthur—his face glowing with emotions any thing but tender. “I will take every step that is due to your daughter. I will neglect no effort that becomes an honourable man. But I am persuaded, madam, that Florence and I would understand each other better, and, as regards my own feelings, I am certain I should be far more eager in hastening our union, if you interfered less between us.”

He spoke so coldly,—so almost sternly,—that neither mother nor daughter had courage to prolong the discussion. They were forced to lay down their arms. Instead of carrying Arthur Rawdon back triumphantly to Cleveland, as they had intended, a close prisoner in their barouche, they returned as fretful and

anxious as they came, indulging in mutual recriminations.

Even Mr. Corbet, though an unobservant man, was struck by the despairing aspect of his nephew-in-law on the eve of his departure for town. Seldom does the lapse of a fortnight operate so fearful a change as was apparent in the young man's pallid face and languid movements. The susceptibility of Creole nature rendered him peculiarly subject to nervous irritation; and abstinence and want of rest had wrought their usual ill-effects.

"Good bye, my dear boy," said the kind-hearted man, grasping his hand at parting. "But for the love of mercy, Arthur, take care of yourself. We must not have you following the steps of poor Willy. We can't afford to lose you!—"

How different would Mrs. Horsford have regarded the preservation of the only life now intervening between Heckington and a child of her own!

It was the week of Goodwood Races ; when the West End of London, deserted by its fashionable population, exhibits only dust and disarray. Arthur Rawdon reached his Chambers in the Albany, unmolested by the sight of a single familiar face. But there, he was startled by the sight of a letter lying on his table, having a sable margin which was to its extent, as the proportions of a young spendthrift's book on the Leger to his fortune,—namely, covering it by seven-eighths.—The West Indian Mail, telegraphed off the Needles the preceding night, had arrived in town half a day sooner than was expected !

And alas ! the news it brought was many degrees *worse* than expected.—His brother had been deprived of life, not by the will of God, but by the ruthless hand of an assassin !—

In a tropical country, where malignant fevers and cholera are rife, sudden death is so frequent an occurrence, that little suspicion had been excited at Fredville by that of the

young European so lately established there. In the prime of health, one week,—dead, the next, would have comprised his story,\* but that something in the papers he left behind, something in his hurried mode of executing a will previously prepared, alarmed the suspicions of Mr. Harman. A post-mortem examination confirmed his apprehensions; and after the despatch of his first letter to Mrs. Enmore, an inquest had been held, whose verdict was in sad accordance with the foresight of the agent.

William Enmore, Esq. of Fredville was pronounced to have “Died from the effects of poison, administered by a person or persons unknown.”

But for what object was the crime accomplished? “Who could possibly be interested in promoting his death?” faltered Arthur, letting the letter which brought this torturing intelligence, fall to the ground. “Harman the agent, if his accounts were in default;—and he is the very man who provokes the in-

quiry: — myself his natural heir,—and God knows how willingly, how eagerly, I would redeem poor Willy's life with my own !”

“ The report of the coroner's inquest,” wrote Mr. Harman, “ being far too voluminous for the post, shall be transmitted in a separate packet, through the Custom House, together with a copy of the will of your late brother, (of which I find myself appointed sole executor,) to my correspondents Messrs. Harman and Wrottesley, of Bedford Square, the solicitors of your late father. Being a little uncertain, sir, concerning your address, I forward this letter to Hertford Street, under cover to Mrs. Enmore.”

To jump into a Hansom, and drive to Bedford Square, was the work of a moment. Not, however, from any solicitude respecting the will ; for, even could he have spared a thought from the fate of his brother, he believed that each possessed only a life-interest in his property, with benefit of survivorship to

both. But on arriving at the office of Harman and Wrottesley, he found his application premature. The papers were still in the Southampton Customhouse.

“Messrs. Harman would have the honour to apprise Mr. Rawdon the moment they arrived. They would probably be delayed a day or two; the mail bag being forwarded, by boat, some time before the steamer reached the docks.”

Two dreary miserable days,—two days alone in his lonely chambers!—Better have remained at Northover wandering about the thymy park. *Almost* better have repaired to Cleveland, to be frankincensed by Mrs. Horsford and her crafty offspring.

## CHAPTER VII.

For the sick or the sorrowful, London is certainly an ungenial place of sojourn. Its noise is the noisiest,—its smoke is the smokiest,—its dust is the most irritating, that molests the human senses in almost any European city. Even in those dull chambers in the Albany into which the sun penetrates but half-an-hour in the twenty-four, straggling in like a reluctant visitor watching the first opportunity to escape,—there was enough of



London and its ways to make poor Arthur shrink from its hollowness.

When, therefore, on the morning of the second day, a letter was placed in his hand addressed in Miss Corbet's handwriting, his heart leapt within him. In the great wilderness, he had felt so wretchedly alone, that though Mr. Corbet had evidently broken his promise not to apprise the family in Hertford Street of his arrival in town, the lapse of faith was readily forgiven ; even though his presence was so earnestly claimed by his cousin, as to admit of no excuse.

Rumours of the violent death of poor Willy had reached Mrs. Enmore ; and it was to Arthur the frantic mother was already looking to avenge the murder of her son.—An abridged report of the inquest had been copied by some London evening paper from the Spanish Town Gazette ; and letters of condolence had consequently poured in, both to Lucretia and her aunt, entreating

particulars which they were as yet unable to afford.

“Come and advise with us, my dearest cousin. You are all that is left to us now,” was poor Tiny’s touching address. “Whatever you may have to resent against my aunt, forget it at such a moment. We *ought* to be together.”

But it was to obtain, rather than communicate information, he hastened to obey the summons. For a fortnight past, Arthur had scarcely looked at a newspaper ; and the paragraph which had enlightened Mrs. Enmore’s gossiping acquaintance, had escaped her son.

He found Miss Corbet anxiously awaiting him, in the little library formerly apportioned to the use of his brother, that she might forestal his interview with her aunt. But they met not as they had parted. She received him without tears. She had wept herself calm. Though the contrast of her black dress seemed to render her colourless face almost

ghastly, as she related the painful particulars which had reached them, no ostensible emotion betrayed her deep-felt anguish.

It appeared that on William Enmore's arrival in the West Indies, he found, as in the case of most minors and absentees, the state of his property such as to necessitate stringent measures of Reform. He who had carried over with him from the land of liberty and a German University, extravagant projects of melioration and beneficence, was compelled to renounce his romantic philanthropy, and adopt the opinion of his agents, that enfranchised slaves can never become as free men; and that some generations must elapse before the coloured race can be legislated for on equal terms with the white.

Still, though for the sake of himself and his property young Enmore had been compelled to measures of reform which rendered him highly unpopular, and convinced the malcontents of the Fredville plantation that his

authority was less pleasant to cope with than the yoke of the inert Harmans, he little suspected that more than one among them had decided that he must instantly return to Europe; that the climate of the West Indies must be made to disagree with him, as it had previously done with his mother.

Had any one suggested to him, during the first few days of his illness, the existence of such a conspiracy, he would have scouted it as ridiculous. In that pestiferous climate, mortal ailment is of such sudden growth, that he believed himself to be sickening for the yellow fever; which, as Lucretia had asserted, was raging in the island. Not a moment did he lose in despatching a messenger to Spanish Town for the best medical advice. But he summoned also his agent and his agent's solicitor, to draw out and attest his will; and before the physician in attendance was admitted to his presence, *that* duty was fulfilled.

But though his presentiments respecting the nature of his disease proved erroneous, the doctor, accustomed to combat the terrible epidemic, declared that he would rather have had to contend with it than with the mysterious disorder by which Mr. Enmore was affected. For days and nights, his medical attendant did not quit his chamber. Yet, in spite of every remedy, the patient languished and languished, sinking under an unaccountable atrophy. His hair fell off,—his face became aged.—When he expired, after ten days' suffering, he might have passed for an elderly man.

So subtle is the action of the vegetable poisons in use in the West Indies and South American States, and so difficult of detection, that, though suspicion was excited even before the death of the victim, the crime would never have been authenticated but from the compunction of one of its perpetrators. They had not intended to destroy, but to incapacitate

young Enmore, the tyrant son of the Fredville tyrant traditionally abhorred; and when, to their surprise and horror, death instead of disease was the result of their attempt, their mutual recriminations were overheard, reported, and searched into, by the very man whose careless administration was the origin of the mischief.

“That so noble a young man should have been sacrificed by a gang of dastardly ruffians,” was the newspaper comment on the details of the inquest, “has produced an unexampled feeling of sympathy throughout the Island of Jamaica.”

“You will find your mother a little unreasonable. But what ought she not to be pardoned at such a moment!” said Miss Corbet, after Arthur had deliberately perused the papers which Mrs. Enmore had compelled Lucretia Rawdon to procure, that she might drink her cup of misery to the dregs. “She insists that our poor lost one

has been sacrificed to the unpopularity of his father."

"The feeling always uppermost in her mind about us, Tiny, is, that we are the children of wrath, the offspring of malice and revenge.—She thinks we ought never to have been born!"

"Promise me, at all events, before you see her, that you will not allow any appeal she may make to your feelings, to incite you into rushing out to Jamaica to promote further spilling of blood!—If the crime be proved, the Law of the land is not apt to deal leniently with malefactors of the class under suspicion. If you love me, *if you love me*, dear Arthur, do not visit the West Indies for an act of vengeance!—Do not risk the last precious life that is left to us!—You are already ill—weak—desponding.—Do not risk your life!"—

How deeply he was touched by this pleading, and by the low, tender, earnest tones in which it was expressed, Arthur Rawdon did

not care to show. But his silence was wholly misinterpreted by his cousin.

“I can understand well that it will be on your part a sacrifice,” said she. “For all your seeming coldness, Arthur, for all the ungraciousness towards Willy into which you allowed yourself to be urged by Robert Horsford, you loved him dearly at heart. You have since deeply repented having wounded his feelings. And now, as an act of atonement, you would fain sacrifice your own life, your own credit, your own safety and happiness, in order to witness the punishment of the wretches who have taken him from us. But will that restore him?—Will that comfort his departed spirit?—Oh, no ! no !—Such retaliation, dear Arthur, is only a pagan craving for blood. Such retaliation, my dear, dear cousin, does but perpetuate evil. Spare us this further anxiety. Your mother’s old age must not be utterly bereaved. Your poor



cousin must not have to mourn the loss of her last, last friend !”

From this painful interview, ending on both sides in tears, Arthur Rawdon was summoned to the presence of his mother. But from *her* tenderness, he had nothing to fear. With her, grief and anger were synonymous. Mary Tudor on her throne, Alva in his Cabinet, could not have denounced more vindictively the miserable untaught negroes who had but followed the instincts of a nature as cruel as her own. She would fain have had dozens of lives sacrificed in atonement of a deed, heinous, indeed, in its results, but distinct from premeditated assassination. By way of what she called a warning and example, she wanted whole families at Fredville to be exterminated ; their homes burned, their gardens rooted up. She wanted to visit hate with hatred, crime with crime, as in the worst retaliations of war.

“ If you ever loved your unfortunate bro-

ther, which I sometimes doubt," said she, "or if you respect your father's memory, which I more than doubt, you owe it to *them*, Arthur, and you owe it to me, to start by the next mail for the West Indies, and stir up the energy of the local tribunals. That pitiful Harman evidently thinks that because these wretches only intended to ruin the health of your brother, not to take his life, (though his life they took as effectually as if they had shot him through the head), they ought to escape punishment."

"We have, at present, mother, no evidence that such is his opinion," replied Arthur, his own feelings of indignation almost subdued by her unwomanly ferocity. "We must wait till further particulars are before us."

"Wait, wait, always *wait!*" was her fretful cry. "Just the argument of Lucretia and Sophy Corbet; those two, to whom poor Willy was so kind, and who seem to care nothing about him now he is in his grave.

When I thought my son had fallen a victim to the climate—to an epidemic—I resigned myself to the will of God; for against His heavy hand rebellion is sin. But now that I know he was murdered, I cannot submit,—I *will* not submit. He shall be revenged.—A life shall be given for his life, Arthur, or my own will be the forfeit!”—

“He shall have *justice*, mother,” answered her son, in a sturdy voice. “More, he himself would never have desired.”

“You refuse, then, to go to Jamaica? You have made up your mind not to investigate on the spot the details of this horrible affair?”

“I refuse nothing. All I desire is better information before I leave England.”

“All you desire is a pretext to linger among those contemptible Horsfords!” cried Mrs. Enmore, a flush of rage tinging her sallow cheeks. Her son uttered not a syllable. An interdictory gesture from Tiny, who was standing behind his mother’s chair,

warned him to forbear. Nor, had he known to how many imputations, equally unjust, his cousin had submitted in silence, would he have overrated the tax on his patience.

A moment afterwards, Miss Corbet was called out of the room.

"A gentleman wished to speak with her on business."

In obeying the summons, she entertained little doubt that it was a pretext devised by Lucretia Rawdon to secure to the mother and son an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête*.

On returning to the library she had recently quitted, however, she found herself mistaken. A middle-aged stranger, holding in his hands papers of so ominous a form that she instinctively connected them with the inquest at Spanish Town, sat there awaiting her.

"I am speaking, I believe, to Mr. Harman, of Bedford Square?" said she, faintly.

"To his managing clerk, Madam. On leaving home this morning, Mr. Lewis Har-

man charged me that, should certain papers arrive from Southampton during his absence, I was to attend to them without delay. He then supposed, Madam, that he should be instructed to forward them to Mr. Arthur Rawdon, of Heckington, now residing in the Albany. They are, however, addressed to yourself."

The heavy packet, sealed with three large black seals, which he now presented, was in itself an object far from cheering. The trembling hands of poor Tiny were quite unequal to the task of breaking them.

"We have, moreover, private instructions from our correspondent, Mr. Philip Harman, of Spanish Town," added the precise legal subordinate, "to place an enclosed copy of the will of the late William Enmore, Esq., of Fredville, in the Island of Jamaica, (of which he is sole executor), in the hands of counsel; to determine whether it will be necessary to take out probate in

England, as well as in the Colonial Consistory Court."

Poor Tiny sat speechless and motionless, deaf to his professional jargon. A will was too formal a document to interest *her* feelings. For she held in her hand a sealed letter, a voluminous one, which had accompanied the huge document now lying on the library table; a letter addressed in the ordinary handwriting of her cousin, and sealed with his ordinary seal; a letter written immediately after his fatal seizure, and bearing on the envelope instructions that it should be delivered to Miss Corbet only in the event of his decease.

It was consequently as a voice from the dead!—

And how, with such a missive in her hand, was she to listen to the technicalities of a tedious lawyer's clerk!

Conscious, however, of the importance of his mission, he went prosing on, while Miss Corbet, with her white, despairing face, sat

gazing on vacancy. She did not even notice the opening of the door, when Arthur, dispatched by his mother to ascertain whether her niece's visitor were not some person connected with the Fredville despatch, made his appearance.

There was no mistaking the accuracy of Mrs. Enmore's surmise. The voluminous folio on the table, the unopened letter in her hand, the grief-stricken countenance of his cousin, certified the errand of the solemn-looking stranger.

"From Mr. Harman?" faltered Arthur, unceremoniously addressing him.

"Mr. Rawdon of Heckington, I presume?" demanded the clerk, after an affirmative bow. "I have waited, Sir, upon Miss Corbet, according to the instructions of my principal, acting for his correspondent at Spanish Town, to remit to her a copy of the proceedings of the inquest held upon your late lamented brother; as well as to make an appointment

with the young lady for the reading of the copy remitted to us, of his last Will and testament."

"Your application, Sir, would, I think, have been more fittingly made to *myself*," rejoined Arthur, haughtily. "You must perceive that Miss Corbet is not just now in a state to be intruded upon."

"Still, Sir, as we are instructed to take counsel's opinion on several points of the will, and as no time is to be lost——"

"Mr. Lewis Harman wrote to me as if uncertain of my address, which is probably the cause of your indiscreet intrusion on my cousin. But I am now here, and at your orders; or, if you prefer it, you can accompany me to my chambers in the Albany."

Unabashed by the peremptory tone of Mr. Rawdon, and with the dry self-possession of a man of the law conscious that he has the best of the case, the ceremonious clerk



replied that he was quite ready to wait Miss Corbet's pleasure;—that he would return in the evening, if it suited her better;—or that Mr. Harman himself would wait upon her at any hour she pleased on the morrow.

“Did my mother commission you, Tiny, to see this person, or his employer?” said Arthur, drawing nearer to her, and addressing her in a very different tone from the one he had just been employing. But as he approached her, he saw unopened in her hand the letter addressed to her in poor Willy's well-known handwriting.—He was startled.—His breath came short.—

“You are of course aware, sir,” resumed the managing clerk, a little indignant at being called “this person,” and in a tone so disparaging,—“that our Mr. Harman is acting for the executor of the late Mr. Enmore's will, by whom we have been placed in communication with this lady, his residuary le-

gatee ; and now, by his death, sole representative of the Fredville property."

"Even armed with such authority," cried Arthur Rawdon, retaining sufficient self-command to conceal in presence of a stranger his utter want of preparation for the announcement, "you have no right to intrude upon Miss Corbet, unsummoned and unsanctioned by herself. At such a moment," he continued, pointing to the minutes of the inquest which lay on the table, "she naturally wishes to be alone. She must have leisure to examine the papers you have brought. When Mr. Harman's attendance is required, I will take care that he is sent for."

A peremptory ring of the bell which brought old Harding into the room to receive orders for opening the door, was a significant conclusion to this address. Nothing remained for the discomfited representative of Harman and Co. but to pick up his hat and depart: secretly vowing that if a certain

Arthur Rawdon, Esq. of Heckington, Herts, ever came within grip of their office, he should not escape without leaving on its briars a few tatters of his fleece.

## CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER his hasty exit, the cousins were some minutes alone together, before either of them stirred or spoke.

At length, Arthur extended his hand towards the Inquest papers, of which the seals were still unbroken.

"Let me spare you the pain of reading these, Tiny," said he. "There may be details too dreadful to meet your eye.—I will submit them to you afterwards, if they con-

tain a single word calculated to afford you comfort."

Miss Corbet nodded assent.

"It *may* be, that you will have to act in this wretched business. It may be, that on *you* will devolve the duty of prosecuting the murderers. You heard that fellow's statement just now?—You know,—perhaps you knew before,—that you have become poor Willy's representative?"

"He said so. But there must be some mistake. It is impossible."

"I should have thought so, but that my brother's solicitor is our informant. I was not aware that Willy possessed the power of disposal over my father's property."

"Nor if he did, would he have alienated it from his family. Either this man has blundered; or——But why talk or think of it now?—Let us first ascertain by what cruel, wicked means he has been lost to us."

"And your letter—your own letter—**HIS**

letter, Tiny.—Will you not read it?—Perhaps you had rather be alone?”—

“No—do not leave me. I cannot open it,—I dare not open it!” she exclaimed, clasping her hands and bursting into an agony of tears, while the letter fell from her lap upon the ground. After silently replacing it, Arthur withdrew to the window,—either that he might be no restraint on her emotions, or to conceal his own.

At length, returning towards his cousin and assuming a seat by her side, he reminded her, with the affectionate earnestness of a brother, that the painful task from which she recoiled, was a matter of duty; that she owed it both to the living and the dead, to acquaint herself with his last wishes, and preside over their execution.

“The letter,” said he, “contains perhaps an explanation of the bequest which Harman has announced. Written during my brother’s last illness and in contemplation of death,

he may even have adverted to the nature of his attack, and surmised the perpetrators of the crime."

"Then read it for me—read it to me yourself,"—she replied, placing it with averted eyes in his hand. "The sight of his handwriting blinds me.—Oh ! my poor Willy !"

And again, tears burst in torrents from her sobbing heart.

Arthur no longer hesitated to break the seal. But on glancing at the letter, he paused.

"No," said he,—“this ought to be read only by yourself. You may repent hereafter, Tiny, that you took me into your confidence. There may be expressions,—there may be allusions not intended to meet the eye of a third person.”—

“Read—read”—murmured Miss Corbet, “there need be no reserves between us. Willy and I were faithful friends,—as brother and sister,—nothing more.—Take his place

with me, Arthur. Be my friend,—my brother. Read the letter. 'Tell me all he has appointed for me to do.'"

Thus adjured, he could no longer refuse. But it was in a hurried and almost inarticulate manner,—in a voice tremulous with suppressed tears,—that he gave utterance to the following words:—

"When this reaches your hand, my own Tiny, the poor hand that traces it will be at rest. I have suffered and am suffering horribly:—*so* horribly, that the word Rest has assumed a comforting sound. The doctors seemed puzzled about my illness, and declare that it is not, as I at first fancied, the first stage of cholera or yellow fever.—No matter. Death is the end of all; as I have felt and known from the first spasm that tortured my miserable frame.

"Therefore, Tiny, therefore, *dear* Tiny, accept my last farewell and blessing,—my last, last thought in this world. I have bequeathed



you everything I possess. Had not the evil destiny been upon us which seems to attach to our race, what joy to have shared with you, my heart's idol, all that it is my consolation, in dying, to secure to your enjoyment !—

“But the fates were against me. That accursed name of Rawdon of Heckington has stood between us like a wall of flint !—

“Do me the justice to remember, however, that, dear as you have been to me from early girlhood until now, never have I profited by our hours of closest intimacy to breathe the slightest avowal of my attachment.—I told you once,—how well I remember it,—that I had overheard a compact between my mother and her own to repair the injury you had sustained in the loss of Heckington, by a marriage with Arthur. I told you how, that very moment, I swore in the depths of my heart never to oppose a measure so likely to assure *his* happiness and the future credit of our name. For even then, I loved you. Even

then, I saw in my little cousin the germ of every womanly charm and excellence which time has so brightly developed. But I remained true to my oath. Half my hatred of Bob Horsford arose from seeing him abet the paltry manœuvres by which that odious family ensnared my boy-brother. That time and reason would work his cure, and open his eyes to the charm of your purer nature, I could not but believe; and deeply regretted the violent opposition by which my mother stimulated his obstinate nature into perseverance. But not the less did I persist in my resolution never, till the marriage was really accomplished, to let my feelings and wishes create an additional obstacle to your becoming what I had so often called you in sport,—‘Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington.’

“Had I then thought of Arthur as he has since compelled me to think,—as arrogant, cold-hearted, and graceless,—far fitter for the frivolous Florence Horsford than for my

precious Tiny,—I should have been less scrupulous.—My conscience would scarcely have restrained my passionate attachment. I might have been happy. *We* might have been happy. The cold, cold hand of death now heavy on my heart, might, perhaps, *perhaps*, have spared me!—

“At the office of the Horsmans in Bedford Square, will be found the draught of a settlement of half my property upon my brother, which was to have been executed, last autumn, on the attainment of my majority, had not my advances been so savagely checked. Driven from his door, insulted by that empty parasite his future brother-in-law, whom he preferred to his own flesh and blood,—he disowned me then, as I disown him *now*!—Even on the brink of the grave, Tiny, I *cannot* forgive Arthur Rawdon.

“For my poor old mother, I need not bespeak your kindness. I have witnessed how you bear and forbear with her. To

old Lucretia, who served me so often as my intermediary with the dear little Sophy Corbet she loved as the child of her favourite cousin, I have left substantial proofs of remembrance. The only other living thing I have to commend to your goodwill is my poor Spitz Fridolin ; whom my mother condemned to the stables during my happy visit to Hertford Street last year, and whom Tiny will perhaps house for my sake.—Poor brute !—he seems to know that his master is writing about him, so wistfully does he sit looking into my face !—

“ And now, my child,—my sister,—my wife that should have been,—a long, long farewell ! —Be happy, dear dear Tiny. Live to be the guardian angel of all around you, as God knows, you were created to be. I do not ask you to reside at Fredville ; the climate might prove as pernicious to you as it did to my mother, and is now doing to myself. But see that my poor people are mercifully dealt

with:—above all, that they are taught and civilised, as well as clothed and fed.

“I have written this at long intervals,—racked by pain,—and so strengthless that even to form the letters is a labour,—therefore forgive my incoherency,—forgive my—”

Arthur Rawdon paused abruptly. But he had done so more than once in endeavouring to decypher the imperfect writing of his dying brother. Miss Corbet therefore still waited, with every pulse throbbing,—every nerve thrilling, for the concluding words of the letter.

Alas! there was nothing more! Physical anguish, rendered more poignant by the prospect of dying without one consoling word from kindred lips, without one interchange of tenderness or trust with the being so dear to him, had probably aggravated his sufferings. For the letter had evidently been precipitately closed and addressed, lest it should be left to the perusal

of the strangers by whom his death-bed was surrounded.

With a thousand sensations of regret and remorse struggling in his heart, Arthur slowly re-folded the letter, and restored it to his cousin; who, mechanically, and without glancing towards him, placed it within the folds of her black dress,—close, *close* to her heart.

“You are right,” said he, in a faint voice. “That letter must not be seen by my mother. —It would break *her* heart as it has mine.— It proves *her* to have been as much his enemy as myself. You are the only person in this house, Tiny, intitled to mourn for Willy:—you, his true unfailing friend!”—

He spoke hurriedly; for footsteps were approaching the door. Angry and impatient, Mrs. Enmore had despatched Lucretia to ascertain what was going on.

“You are not equal, just now, my dear cousin, to an interview with my mother,”

said Mr. Rawdon, interposing between them. "Go to your own room, and compose yourself. I will acquaint her with all that is necessary for her to know."

Softened as he was by the perusal of his brother's dying words, it produced a painful revulsion of feeling to perceive how much more interested was his mother in the intelligence he had to communicate concerning the disposal of the Fredville estate, than in the details of the Inquest, which, on rejoining her in the drawing-room, he proposed to read to her. She kept interrupting him every moment by inquiries which, at present, he was unprepared to answer. All he could tell her respecting his brother's testamentary dispositions, was,—that Tiny was his heiress.

At the moment, it struck him as extraordinary that this astounding and unlooked-for fact, instead of exciting her indignation, seemed to afford her pleasure.—He had prepared himself for an outcry of indignation that

the property of the Enmore family should be assigned to an alien. Instead of which, she seemed more than resigned to so partial a distribution of their inheritance.

"It is your own doing, Arthur," said she. "Had you not exasperated your brother by rejecting his affectionate advances, last summer, you would have been now in possession of all."

It was clear, however, that she indulged in no maternal regrets; nor was it till some hours afterwards, when he had resigned her to the care of Lucretia, and Tiny to the better restoratives of solitude and repose, that he explained to himself Mrs. Enmore's singular indifference to his interests, by the fact that his disinheritance would prevent his immediate marriage with Florence Horsford.

*That* was, at present, her reigning antipathy. That her surviving son, sole representative of the Rawdons of Heckington, should be deprived of the property which would have



enabled him to fulfil his engagements with a family of designing adventurers, fully reconciled her to the alienation of the Fredville estate.

Of two evils, she thankfully accepted the lesser.

“But what is to become of Tiny?” inquired Lucretia Rawdon, when, the following day, Mrs. Enmore imparted to her a portion of all she had learned from her son. “Is *she* to go over to Jamaica and be poisoned, like our darling?—Or will she return to Northover, and inspect the weaning of calves and churning of butter, cousin Jane, till the Almighty calls you to himself, and restores Heckington to its rightful owner?—Or will Henry Corbet resign his agency?—I only wish the Chancellor would appoint me in his place! I’m sure he’d be puzzled to find a more vigilant guardian.”

“These are early days to decide upon any thing,” replied Mrs. Enmore, whose spirits were gradually reviving, now that, as she

herself phrased it, she "knew the worst."—"All I can say is, that if Tiny wishes for a home under any other roof than her father's, she may command it under mine. I have no dearer wish than to keep her with me till she forms a suitable marriage."

Mrs. Enmore judiciously kept to herself that *her* notion of a suitable marriage for Sophia Corbet of Fredville was with Arthur Rawdon of Heckington.—Whatever pledges he might forfeit, or whatever hearts he might break, *she*, at least, was ready to sanction the alliance!—

## CHAPTER IX.

“My late client would, I am certain, have refrained from many explanations he has seen fit to make in this testamentary document,” said Mr. Harman, of Bedford Square, after reciting to Miss Corbet, shortly afterwards, the contents of William Enmore’s will, “had he been aware of the publicity necessarily attached to such instruments. He adverts, as he should scarcely have done in a legal paper, to the motives of dissension between him and

his brother; as well as to the possibility that Miss Corbet may wish to repudiate his princely bequest—(nearer five thousand per annum, my dear madam, than four !) and provides against any such contingency, by leaving the Fredville estates, in remainder, to her brother Alfred Corbet of Grenfield House; or in case of his death during his minority, or afterwards intestate, and unmarried, to his younger brother Edgar—both, as I conceive, aliens to him in blood.—But it is much to be regretted that he has coupled with this strong demonstration of attachment to one relative, and estrangment from his next of kin, certain strong animadversions on a family unconnected with his own. No one, in my opinion, has a right to vilify another in a document destined to publicity.”

“ And you are certain,” was Miss Corbet’s reply to this lengthy harangue, “ that there is no way of setting aside this will, and restoring the property to the rightful heir ?”

“None whatever. If wills could be cancelled by survivors, where would be the use of such instruments?—We have read, in history, of Kings who destroyed the wills of their predecessors. In private life,” added the lawyer with a grim smile,—“such an act would come within reach of the criminal law. In the will before us, several persons are interested. Your cousin, Miss Lucretia Rawdon takes an annuity of a hundred a-year; and the due payment of Mrs. Enmore’s jointure of eighteen hundred, rests with the executor,—my late father having been her trustee.—Your youngest brother, a child of tender age, has a reversionary interest in the whole. In short, my dear madam, all that remains for us is to apply for probate, here, as it has been already granted in the Colonial Court; and my brother will have the pleasure of inducting you, or whosoever you may appoint as your representative, into possession of the property:—or, if you prefer it, remitting to you half-yearly, through

my hands, the annual product, as well as the balance sheet of his accounts."

Already ill and flurried, poor Tiny looked thoroughly overcome by this announcement. A Druidess with the black veil of condemnation over her head, could scarcely have been more weighed down than Sophia Corbet by her compulsory heiressship!—To be in possession for life of nearly five thousand a year, of which two thousand five hundred were in immediate enjoyment, was, to a person reared within the narrow horizon of Grenfield House, like succeeding to the revenues of an Empire.—But it afforded her no satisfaction. This unsought wealth was the bequeathment of her dead cousin. This unsought wealth ought to have been the property of another.

Of Arthur's sentiments concerning his brother's will, she had no means of judging. He was giving himself up so entirely to consultations with medical and legal authorities concerning the evidence brought forward on

the inquest, and the means of wreaking the utmost rigour of the law on the wretches it had served to unmask, that little was seen of him in Hertford Street. But it struck his cousin with some surprise that, when thanking her for her liberal though abortive intentions towards him, of which he had been apprised by Harman (who described Miss Sophia Corbet as a very charming young lady, but so romantic and ignorant of business that it was fortunate she had fallen into honourable hands,) he added to his acknowledgment of her generosity—"Best as it is, Tiny,—*best* as it is!—In all respects, Willy has shown himself my superior. In all respects, Willy's elections have been judicious. If poor now, I shall be rich enough in my old age,—the only time when riches are indispensable. Best as it is!"—

To be an heiress, therefore, Sophia Corbet was forced to resign herself; but it was not till she found the will unassailable, and her

own desire to renounce the inheritance unaccomplishable, that she communicated to her father tidings of the golden shower which had fallen upon his house.

Right welcome was it to her feelings to see in how manly and gentlemanly a spirit the tidings were received. For his little girl, who deserved all the good that could befall her, and would deal honourably with any fortune she might inherit, Henry Corbet rejoiced at the miracle.—But as regarded the boys, he would prefer, he said, that neither of them ever heard of the reversion. “It would unsettle their minds for their own humble fortunes; and he trusted in God that they might never profit by William Enmore’s generous goodwill. Tiny must marry, and have heirs of her own.”

“But if such are his notions, I trust, my dear child,” observed Lucretia, on hearing how little Mr. Corbet appeared inclined to interfere in his daughter’s affairs, or plume



himself on her accession of fortune,—“I sincerely trust Henry Corbet won’t be thinking of giving up the agency?—He mustn’t grow too grand for Northover.—It was poor Willy’s first and last desire that you would reside on the spot.”

“Not more than it is mine,” replied Sophia. “My wishes are bounded by the ring-fence of Heckington. At some future time, when I grow older, and wiser, and stronger, I may feel it my duty to visit Fredville, and endeavour to carry out the intentions of him to whom I owe so much. At present, all I desire is quiet.”

“Yes,—*at present*,”—persisted Lucretia, who was profiting by Mrs. Enmore’s evening doze to say more than, in cousin Jane’s afflicted state, she permitted herself to observe while she was listening.—“But the time will come, Tiny, when you will mix more largely with the world. You must assume the place that belongs to you. I don’t want to see you

become a flighty gadabout, like those fashion-mongering Horsfords. But you ought to see something of good company, my dear. You ought to have a London home—”

“And so she has,”—interrupted Mrs. Enmore, suddenly unclosing her eyes,—her ears having been previously open. “My house is her home. Till she marries, I trust she will have no other. In his last moments, Willy bad her be a daughter to me.”

“And a daughter I will be, if you permit it!” replied her niece, stooping to imprint a dutiful kiss on her contracted forehead.—“Northover will remain my home. Northover, which is good enough for my father, is good enough for *me*. You must visit us there, Aunt Enmore; and in return, I shall be your frequent visitor here.”

The intimation seemed to brighten the usually cold eyes of her aunt.—Mrs. Enmore did not so much as advert to the declaration she had so often made, that “never again would

she set foot in Heckington." Her sole anxiety was to retain her niece as an inmate. Though one of her sons was lost to her for ever, the other was restored ; and chiefly, by the interposition of his cousin. Arthur might again escape her, unless attracted to her presence by the magnet which had already proved so powerful.

On this point, her mind was as yet at ease. Arthur was already off to Jamaica ; and Miss Corbet, depressed and weary, had returned to the shady solitudes of home. And as the marine propensities which expanded annually, in the month of September, in the Great-British nature of her *Maire du Palais* and Mistress of the Robes, were by no means extinguished by the influence of a family-mourning, Mrs. Enmore proceeded as usual to St. Leonards ; having for the first time secured the companionship of her obnoxious kinswoman. Now that family troubles were thickening around her, it was consolatory to

command a ready ear into which her grievances could be poured. She was beginning to recognise in Lucretia the charm found by Montaigne in the company of Boëthius : that each was thoroughly conversant with the affairs of the other.

But while these two elderly ladies were drowsily jogging through their monotonous airings, and droning over their insipid meals, Cleveland was in a state of intense commotion. Never were people so aggrieved as the Horsfords. The world seemed really in league against them ;—ungrateful world,—for which they lived and acted,—plotted, dressed and talked !—.

In the first place, the graceless Bob whom, when by stress of interest, he obtained a secretaryship, for which he was about as fit as one of his father's coachhorses, they had regarded as a brand snatched from the fire, had not only made so rash a book at Goodwood as left his account with his bankers alarmingly over-

drawn, and dipped deeply into the all but empty pockets of his father ; but had let in his intended brother-in-law, Charles Turberville, for so large a share of his liabilities, that the Zens of the Abbey had fulminated his bolts, and interdicted all further intercourse with Clevelands, whether as regarded its male or female representatives.

In the next, so far from securing for Florence a brilliant wedding and handsome establishment, the death of William Enmore, over which Clevelands had exulted with such ghoul-like triumph, had effected nothing but to despatch Arthur Rawdon to Jamaica, without so much as a parting interview with his lady-love.

On the other hand, Miss Corbet had removed little Alfred from Aldenham to Eton ; and was met in the more secluded drives of the neighbourhood in a pony phaeton which seemed to have been created by a fairy's wand ; nay, the old lady in a close black bonnet

who accompanied her, was said to be Arthur Rawdon's mother. But as the answer to visitors at the lodge gate of Heckington and porch of Northover was, that "Mr. and Miss Corbet at present received no visitors," neighbourly curiosity was distanced.

Scandal, however, unluckily, was not silenced. If it be "a far cry to Loch Awe," Mrs. Horsford, evidently considering Jamaica out of earshot, indulged herself to the utmost in grumbling and accusation.

"There was no possible doubt," she said, "that Mr. Rawdon of Heckington" (never omitting the qualification from which he derived his consequence in the county), "could set aside his brother's disgraceful will, whenever he thought proper. Indeed, she had reason to suppose that he had proceeded to the West Indies chiefly to collect evidence, on the spot, of William Enmore's infirmity of intellect. To leave to a relation on his mother's side an estate which, for more than a

century, had been in possession of his father's family, was an act of such manifest injustice, as to leave no doubt of his insanity. It would of course be painful to the family to have it proved in court. But it was a duty which Mr. Rawdon of Heckington owed to himself, and it was a duty he owed to his affianced wife ; who, she must say (who perhaps ought not to say it of her own daughter), had, throughout the whole business, behaved like an angel."

"Throughout the whole business behaved like an angel !" echoed her obsequious chorus, —Mr. and Mrs. William Hartland.—But there were other neighbours of less abject caste, who were of opinion that, for the betrothed of a man undergoing such severe family-affliction, the fair Florence made a somewhat prominent exhibition of her angelic charms at certain county festivities, at Hatfield, Gorhambury, and Knebworth. Though she might consider herself bound to do the

honours of Hertfordshire to so intimate a friend of her brother-in-law, Sir James Armstead, as the handsome and popular George Marsham, there was scarcely occasion to do them in such *very* dark corners of the conservatory, or in such secluded nooks of bookrooms, as she usually selected for the purpose.

But then, poor thing, as Mrs. Horsford judiciously remarked, she was so much in want of something to cheer her! Poor Flo. was a girl of such exquisite sensibility, that she would otherwise have become a prey to low spirits. "That the man she loved was gone to avenge his murdered brother's death, in a spot where it was more than likely he would be murdered in his turn, was a trying ordeal for any girl."

It was not thus, however, that poor Tiny endeavoured to solace her sorrow. Hunt Balls, *fêtes* and George Marsham, were to *her*. altogether vanity. She was living with the



dead—with the absent—with the reminiscences of her own heart.

Even, however, in the peaceful seclusion of her country-home, the serenity of poor Placidia was occasionally *almost* ruffled by the idle talk brought back by her father from justice meetings, “sessions and ‘sizes;’”—rumours emanating from Clevelands, and scandals hatched by the Horsfords; who, compelled by the coldness with which their advances were received by the heiress, to admit that there was no hope of engrafting her on the family-tree by a match with Bob or one of her lanky-haired partners at Lady Armstead’s wedding-ball,—revenged themselves by the most malicious insinuations. Since she would not accept them as allies, Mrs. Horsford resolved to teach her their importance as antagonists.

To such people, the art of plausible misrepresentation is familiar. It was so easy to hint that, the Sophia Corbet who, as a cun-

ning child, had wheedled her grandmother out of a legacy of five thousand pounds, had, as an artful girl, deluded her Creole cousin into disinheriting in her favour his only brother. According to their account, *she* was the origin of all the objections raised by Mrs. Enmore to the union of her son Arthur with “poor dear Florence;” — she was, in fact, a serpent which Clevelands had warmed in its bosom, to sting it to death. For “nothing could exceed the kindness shown her by the whole Horsford family, at a time when this magnificent heiress was only a poor little neglected girl in a pinafore, pummeling the Latin grammar into her little brothers. Even *then* they *ought* to have found her out. For she had played a most mischievous part between them and their dear Amy; creating dissensions with the view of establishing a *pied-à-terre* in Park Lane and at Higham Grange. At the latter place, moreover, she had provoked the disgust of the whole neigh-

bourhood by her bold set at young Turberville; who, luckily, was rescued by his parents from her clutch, in time to enable him to fix his affections in a more suitable quarter.”—

Other slanders, still coarser in their audacity, were of course silenced in presence of Mr. Corbet; being of a nature to which a father responds by a clenched fist or a hair trigger. But they were not the less circulated. The mouth of Mrs. Horsford combined the peculiarities ascribed to the princess in a certain fairy tale; — if at times it dropped pearls and diamonds, it was quite as capable of producing toads and scorpions.

Though far from insubordinate to the forms and opinions of society, Miss Corbet took less heed than might have been expected of the misinterpretation placed upon her conduct. The conflict in her mind absorbed all its faculties. Her heart was too busy with the past and the future, to allow leisure for present resentments.

And "much coin" was bringing with it, as usual, "much care." Her father was busy with the recent addition to his stables and stock; Alfred with his upper-school classics, and Edgar with the nursery-governess so much harder to please than sister Tiny. But she, to whose open hand they were indebted for these acquisitions, was labouring more severely than them all; in the disentanglement, namely, of those mysteries of the heart more hard to interpret than the most abstruse arcana of science.

But amidst the struggles of her mind, a transformation of character was as imperceptibly effecting, as when, in the confusion of chaos, the round world itself was silently gathered into form.

The young girl, still so young, felt that she must henceforward become an active agent in the business of life. Duties had devolved upon her, which demanded the utmost exercise of her principles and judgment. The happiness once so nearly within her reach, which had

escaped her, might, she fancied, have been attained, had she exhibited more decision—more promptitude.—In this transitory life, to trust to the chapter of accidents, when the exercise of moral will is in our power, is to tempt providence.

That Arthur had no thoughts of an immediate return to England was plainly implied in the correspondence of Harman the agent, with Bedford Square. It appeared likely that he might even spend the winter in Jamaica. She must therefore lose no time in explaining herself by letter.

## CHAPTER X.

As a boy, Arthur Rawdon had detested the West Indies. The uneasy home created at Fredville by his father's imperious temper and his mother's repinings after Heckington, had rendered every thing distasteful. Scenes of violence between themselves, and of persecution exercised in the Plantation, were not likely to reconcile him to the loss of old Mrs. Rawdon's idolising fondness and the pastimes of English country-life.

But these contrarities had served at the time to knit into closer fraternal love the hearts of the two little fellows who had never yet heard the fatal words seniority,—preference,—eldest son,—property,—estate—income—as applied to their own prospects. And that the forbidden fruit which brought in and discord into the world was a *Golden* apple, who can doubt; or that a state of Innocence implies one in which “shekels of the tested gold” were never heard of!—

The sordid tenets of worldly wisdom had, however, only prevailed for a time; and now that the grown man was thrown back into the haunts of his boyhood, how tenderly did his mind recur to those confiding days of brotherly love; those days when he and Willy were allies, united against a common foe; their chief care to avoid and distance their parents and tutor; their only pleasure, to love and serve each other.

What would Arthur now have given, as he

wandered through the neglected rooms and echoing verandahs of Fredville, to recal, for a single day, — a single hour, — that happy brotherly intercourse ; — unembittered by an act for atonement, — or self-accusation ? How completely had they been wrapt up in each other ! — How thoroughly had their boyish feats and mischiefs been enjoyed in common !

The scenes around him, so little thought of during the intervening years, brought back to him in consequence in more vivid entirety, the ties with which they were connected. Sunshine and shade, — the scent of the tropical flowers, — the flavour of the tropical fruits, — the peculiarities of tropical vegetation, — seemed suddenly to transport him into the past. Some beautiful bird or curious insect served to recal the stolen holidays when Willy and he escaped from home, and were brought back, captured by a favourite old negro named Remus, who officiated as Provost Marshal to their father.



No wonder, therefore, that, when daylight with its glories and excitements was withdrawn, the evenings of the solitary exile weighed him down to the dust.—The trial instituted by government against his brother's murderers, was fortunately ended before he reached Jamaica; and two of the accused negroes, convicted of "administering noxious drugs to the late proprietor of Fredville, with intent to do him grievous bodily harm, but not with intent to kill or slay," were already undergoing their sentence of ten years' penal servitude. There was consequently no field for further action. He remained only to muse and to suffer, a self-installed inmate at Fredville under the authority of his brother's executor; obsequiously waited upon by the identical old Remus who had tyrannised over his boyhood.

But he seemed riveted to the spot. So apt are we to linger lovingly, in after-life, amid scenes disdained in youth as tame or tedious;

so apt to select for enjoyment the very viands we loathed as children,—the books or pictures or prints, from which we turned satiated away.

It might be, however, that Arthur Rawdon, while wandering among the feathery shadows of the bamboos, or watching the darting of the humming-birds among glowing masses of *Bignonia* in the neglected gardens of Fredville, had other thoughts than the reconstruction of the dislocated fabric of his life. In addition to the reveries which seem to restore poor Willy to him in life and light,—not as he had made him,—not as the German student, addicted to beer and tobacco, into which domestic jealousy and pitiful envy had degraded his noble nature,—not as the “young sugar-broker,” over whom Bob Horsford had taught him to exult,—but as the warmhearted kindly being—a better, dearer, nobler portion of himself,—so ready to love him that he even renounced the hand of their dear Tiny for his

sake,—in addition to all these reflections, a growing dread of the ties in which he had entangled himself, or suffered himself to be entangled, hung heavily on his mind.

Delay as he might among scenes so replete with interest both painful and pleasing, and where numerous connections and friends of his late father beset him with hospitality that afforded decent pretext for prolonging his sojourn at Fredville, he must, in the sequel, return to England and the Horsfords.—With them, since the nature of his brother's will transpired, he had held no personal intercourse.—But their previous indelicate and mercenary conduct, left him little doubt of what he should have to undergo when they met again ; —how unscrupulously his future mother-in-law would prompt his acceptance of his cousin's generous offers, and how insolently she would revile him on finding him resolute to decline.

What people to live amongst, for the re-

mainder of his days !—What ignoble natures to rely upon for support and comfort !—How dreadful to know that the woman who, for time and eternity, was to constitute a portion of his existence,—his mortal and immortal companion,—was a mere actress ;—playing on the stage of life a part acquired by rote, and subsiding behind the scenes, into discontented and slovenly ennui !—

*How* should he bear it !—Might he not perhaps become, like his father before him, a coarse domestic tyrant ; avenging on this un-companionable puppet, his mistake and his disappointment ? Might he not, harassed and morose, lapse into a harsh father,—a savage master,—a bad member of the community ?—Was not his vocation as man and citizen, marred for ever ?—

Again, how thoroughly must his high-minded cousin despise him. With so few advantages of education as she had enjoyed, the daughter of a man so dull and limited

in capacity as Henry Corbet, how generous were *her* impulses, how right-minded *her* decisions!—How much had she shown herself his superior in all the relations of life!—

Well did he recollect the sarcastic smile with which he had listened, the preceding winter, at Turberville Abbey, to Sir James Armstead's encomiums of the Sophia Corbet, with whom he was himself at that time so little acquainted; and how he and Florence had laughed together at the solemn Romeo, Mr. Frere, when sympathised with by the Armsteads as driven to despair by the indifference of the absent Tiny.

"I don't wonder he is out of spirits," was Sir James's comment on the melancholy countenance of the mild official. "It is not often a man obtains even the chance of such a wife;—good and true as a man of the highest principles and nicest honour, yet endowed with the sweetest fascinations of her sex."

He had laughed *then* at Sir James's enthusiasm, because the Horsfords laughed. He did not laugh *now*.—He repented only that such was the girl he might have converted into Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington; such the cousin Tiny who, but for him, would have become the dearest of sisters; such the pure and high-minded woman whom he could scarcely expect would stoop to become the friend and companion of his future wife!

Dark indeed was his horizon. But by degrees, as is the case with all solitary dreamers, the mists began to clear away. A ragged rent in the clouds served to afford passage for a ray of light.

Why should he submit to all this?—Why sacrifice himself?—Why fling away his life—the most glorious endowment we receive at the hands of our Creator?

That the heart of Florence was deeply engaged in his favour, he had reason to disbelieve. He had been formerly inclined to snub

the clear-sighted brother who presumed to insinuate that her affections were pledged to Heckington, not to the Arthur Rawdon attached to the premises. But he had since witnessed, at Higham Grange, her foolish flirtation with George Marsham ; which, on the part of the latter, purported only to mark his indifference to Miss Corbet's departure. And though Mrs. Horsford had endeavoured to palliate her daughter's flighty conduct by assurances that it arose from her desire to revive by a little timely jealousy his apparently declining affection, he could not blind himself to the fact that Marsham's handsome face and Marsham's brilliant reputation, had their share in her folly.

He now deeply regretted that he had not, at the moment, resented with manly firmness the levity of her conduct. But he was at that period under the control of her brother, and at enmity with his own. Above all, he had not learned to appreciate by contrast with his calm

lady-like cousin, the flashy insincerity of the Horsfords. Ashamed of being slighted in so large and public a circle, he had contented himself with exacting that there should be an end to her intimacy with the fashionable pamphleteer. But the remembrance of her flippant resentment recurring to his memory, now, among the plantain-trees and humming-birds, convinced him that, should he indeed find courage to break his engagement, no broken heart would render the fracture compound. On that point, his conscience was at ease.

"After all," he argued, as the fickle heart of man is apt to argue, in such emergencies, "should I not inflict a far more cruel injury on this girl by making her my wife, now that I have ceased to love her,—now that all the illusions with which my boyish fancy invested her, have vanished for ever,—now that I see her and hers in their true light, as fair-faced impostors, revolting as that fairy Melusina I used to read of, with the face of a woman



ending in the coil of a serpent,—than by placing the truth honestly before her; and leaving her to marry George Marsham, or any other man to whom the liberal dowry with which I would supply her, might be an object?"

Often had Mrs. Horsford suggested to him, when spurring him on to the fulfilment of his matrimonial engagement, that, at a sufficient rate of interest, it would be easy to raise a considerable sum by mortgage on the Heckington property. He would now adopt her advice; not to enable himself to fulfil, but to annul his engagement. Money would do it. He felt convinced that money would set him free!—

In this resolution, he was strengthened by the conviction that it would enable him to realise one of the last wishes of his brother. To Willy, the whole Horsford family were objects of detestation or contempt; and there was no sacrifice he would not cheerfully have made to release his brother from their toils.

At no great distance from Fredville, in the deep recesses of a gloomy grove, divided from the cane-fields by one of those finely-wooded, rifted coves, which constitute the most beautiful portion of the Island landscape, stood the venerable mausoleum of the Enmore family ; a consecrated spot, such as, in the earlier days of the civilisation of Jamaica, was regarded as indispensable to the dignity of a wealthy proprietor.

There, the late Reginald Enmore had intended to lie, by the side of his parents and their progenitors. But it was at Heckington *his* remains were fated to rest ; while his son, to whom that English village-church would have been so much more congenial, was fated to entombment within the lonely monument sheltered by the luxuriant vegetation of the tropics.

Ancient cotton-trees, coeval with the building, extended over it, as if in benediction, their spectral white arms, now leafless and ghastly ; while here and there, at a distance, rich groups

of the mango-tree, with which the great Rodney, half a century before, enriched the district, threw into relief, by their dark foliage, the dim grey stones of the sepulchre.

Thither, in the still evenings which the bloom of the logwood rendered fragrant, did Arthur direct his solitary footsteps ; and, amid the hush of nature, broken only by the occasional notes of the mocking-bird — the nightingale of the tropics,—stand transfixed before the iron gate surmounted by sculptures symbolic of its mournful destination : appealing, in the depths of his soul, to the memory of the dead, to confirm and sanctify the step he was meditating.

There lay the brother who had so loved him, and whom he had so outraged. There lay one whose most earnest desire had been to rescue him from irretrievable union with the low-minded and unworthy. Though impetuous, the moral nature of Arthur Rawdon was feeble and vacillating ; and it needed this

strengthening of his purpose by connecting it with a spot and antecedents so sacred, to reconcile him to the scandal certain to ensue from such a rupture as he contemplated; to the vulgar abuse of Bob Horsford, and the supercilious sarcasms of his mother and sisters.

As if such paltry retribution were to be weighed against the evils of a connection certain to confirm every frailty of his nature,—every failing of his character; depress his aims in life,—degrade the tone of his mind,—and render him, like the frivolous tribe at Clevelands, vain, hollow, groveling, and contemptible!—

Mr. Harman, a worthy, undemonstrative man, acclimatised into the languor of Creole habits, though poor Willy Enmore had somewhat alarmed him by his eccentric starts of emotion, was utterly at a loss to account for the fluctuations of temper and temperament now exhibited by his brother.

The agent was a widower, with two spinster daughters,—Mary and Martha,—or, as they Lindley-Murrayishly called themselves on their visiting-cards, “the Misses Harman,”—apathetic, narrow-minded women, withered to a chip by climate and seclusion; who, never having been thirty miles from Fredville, regarded the two young Enmores as Princes of the Blood. Willy, on his accession to the property, had become at once their Prince of Wales. But though Arthur, by exclusion from the succession, had forfeited a considerable portion of his consequence, they were deeply concerned at noticing his declining health. Just such variability of humour and complexion as *he* was beginning to exhibit, had marked the commencement of Willy’s indisposition. Those two young men, the handsomest and most distinguished-looking who had ever met their inexperienced eyes, seemed predestined to perish from the moment they set foot on the land of their forefathers!

So perseveringly, indeed, did the sympathising damsels point out the change to their father, that the poor agent began to grow anxious lest there should have been some renewal of the flagitious dealings by which his brother had been destroyed. The death of a second victim might perhaps implicate even himself in suspicion; the convicted negroes having stated, in court, that their object in endeavouring to hasten young Enmore's departure from Fredville, was to secure the renewal of the unmolested rule of "Massa Harman."

But independent of these selfish terrors, he was sincerely interested in the destiny of the two fine young men whom, as boys, he had often begged off from their father's unmeasured coercions. On young Rawdon's first arrival, he had endeavoured to persuade him to take up his abode at the agency-house, (known on the Plantation by the name of "St. Marks,") rather than in the deserted mansion at Fred-

ville, so fraught with melancholy associations; little surmising that those very associations constituted the charm of the place in the eyes of the last of the Enmores.

But now, he did more than entreat,—he almost insisted; and at length, finding all other arguments ineffectual, hinted his belief that the malefactors who had conspired against the health of his brother, were tampering with his own.

But Arthur was neither to be intimidated nor persuaded.

“For what purpose,” he said, “could the wretches suspected of this new crime desire to drive *him* from the island?—*He* had no power over them—no desire to interfere in the legislation of Fredville. As Mr. Harman was well aware, he had never so much as expressed an opinion concerning the local reforms and institutions established by his late brother.”

The utmost he could be persuaded to do to appease the solitudes of the prim tender

sisters, was occasionally to join the family dinner-table at St. Mark's ; where, while by their more practical father his despondency was attributed to vexation at witnessing the prosperity of the fine estate so strangely alienated from its rightful heir, there was some excuse for the sentimental spinsters' endeavours to convert him into a Byronio hero.

One day, however, he made his appearance at St. Mark's with a countenance so much brightened and a deportment so *almost* cheerful, that Mary and Martha exchanged looks of mutual gratulation. The mysterious griefs of the Manfred, Lara, or Childe Harold of Heckington, were evidently in process of mitigation. Before the winter was over, he would perhaps sufficiently overcome his fraternal distresses, to mix in the society of the district, and become like other people.

The truth was, that he had that morning disburthened his mind by completing, for the morrow's mail, the two letters to Florence



and her father which were to announce the rupture of his engagement. A bond for ten thousand pounds, payable on the death of his mother, and to be kept both then and for ever an inviolable secret among the parties, purported to afford such compensation as, under similar circumstances, is adjudged by the law. But if this offer or his change of inclinations were resented by the family, he offered to the brothers of the injured lady the personal satisfaction they were entitled to claim.

Except the simple fact of renouncing his engagement, the letter contained no offence. He wrote as temperately as firmly ; admitting himself to blame ; but refusing to redeem the fault by a still deeper wrong.

Such was the origin of the renovated spirits that restored light and life to the looks of Arthur Rawdon.—As he joined, almost for the first time, in cheerful conversation with his hosts, Mary and Martha, who had always

admitted his features and figure to be finer than those of their favourite Willy Enmore, began to think him nearly as agreeable. If less interested in the schools and infirmaries of the Fredville estate, over which they had for so many years judiciously presided, it was not to be expected that *he* should care so much for the well-being of the property of which he had been despoiled.

They succeeded, however, before dinner was over, in obtaining from him a promise that he would visit, on his way to the Hurtsfield Plantation with their father, the following day, the St. Mark's Alms-houses for infirm negroes, originally endowed by his family.

"You will thus be enabled," observed the elder of the "Misses," "to communicate to Miss Corbet, on your return to England, the exact state of the premises; which are in want of far more substantial reparation than papa chooses to undertake on his own authority.

At the moment of Mr. William Enmore's ever-to-be deplored seizure, he was engaged in overlooking plans and estimates for the repair and extension of St. Mark's."

"In that case, Mr. Harman must communicate with my cousin on the subject," Arthur said. "I studiously abstain from interfering in the affairs of the estate; and many mails may pass before I leave Jamaica."

Welcome news to the damsels, of whose vague romance he was the hero!—It was some comfort to know that the return of spring might find him still at Fredville.

Scarcely, however, had they expressed their satisfaction at hearing he had determined to prolong his sojourn among them, when a huge packet of letters was brought in:—the London mail, forwarded with the usual local letters, by Mr. Harman's daily postman.

"Perhaps," exclaimed Mr. Rawdon, with heightened colour and eager eyes, indignant at the composure with which the agent went

on sugaring his pine apple, instead of hastening to open the despatch,—“perhaps there may be among your letters one or two for myself?”

“Only business letters,” rejoined James Harman, glancing at the well-known superscriptions which satisfied *him* that they might wait for investigation till the close of his dessert. Whereupon the negro in attendance officiously informed his master’s guest that the postman, unaware he was dining at St. Mark’s, had carried several letters for “Massa Rawdon” on to Fredville.

After this announcement, the claret before him might have been nectar, and failed to detain him. Starting up unceremoniously from table, he prepared, almost without apology, for immediate departure. To Mr. Harman’s entreaties that he would allow a messenger to be despatched for the letters, or at least that he would wait for his horse to be put to, he scarcely even replied.

Letters such as *he* expected, must be perused where no curious eye was fixed upon him. Letters such as he *hoped* to receive, must be enjoyed under the sacred roof-tree of home!—

## CHAPTER XI.

HIS anticipations were realised ; or rather satisfactorily exceeded. For though one of the large enclosures lying on his table at Fredville was addressed in the handwriting of his cousin, not a line awaited him from any of the Horsfords.

They had perhaps taken offence at his precipitate departure and obstinate silence.—And oh ! that they might !—

The remaining two letters were from his

mother and solicitor; and there was consequently no drawback on the eagerness with which he fastened upon Miss Corbet's packet. But as an epicure delays over his feast, he prepared himself for the enjoyment of its perusal by throwing a log on the fire,—drawing down the shade of his reading-lamp,—and establishing himself luxuriously in his arm-chair. In former years, he used to tear open with impetuous hands the letters of Florence Horsford, and read them where he stood, trembling, and devouring them with his eyes. But a letter from Placidia was to be otherwise dealt with; a letter of sweet confiding friendship, supplying balm for the ills of life, or courage for their endurance.

The contents of the present communication were, however, of a wholly unexpected nature.

“I write, dear Arthur,” it began, “to entreat your immediate return to England. It

is indispensable to your honour and future happiness, that you should be here—”

Already, Arthur was beginning to be thankful that no impediment need detain him a day longer at Fredville!—Already, the letter trembled in his hands!—

“ You will admit that your marriage with poor Florence must not be further delayed, when I tell you that she has no longer a home. Cleveland's has been in the hands of bailiffs; and Mr. Horsford has only been rescued from prison by the interposition of his son-in-law, Sir James Armstead.—The poorest roof you could offer to your affianced wife, would be welcome under such circumstances. But you are able to do much for her, and for them all. The deed made out by poor Willy, securing you the moiety of the proceeds of his West India property, has been fully executed by his successor; and though your susceptible pride may induce you to reject the donation, you cannot compel me to resume it. The money



would only accumulate in the hands of the Harmans. Your cousin Tiny will never touch a shilling of what is now your own.

"That each of us, however, may concede some sacrifice,—(and I am afraid there is something of Rawdon arrogance in the nature of both,)—you shall, on attaining your rightful inheritance at Heckington, when your own income will suffice you,—cancel the settlement I have made. Till then, who knows better than yourself how very far the remaining half exceeds my desires or requirements? It is our intention to remain at Northover till Heckington shall fall into your hands; and most acceptable will it be both to my father and myself, to have you and your wife here, as our guests."

Arthur Rawdon drew a deep and shuddering breath. He had scarcely courage to read on.

"The sad particulars of the poor Horsfords' misfortunes, I need scarcely relate," continued

Miss Corbet, "as you will soon learn all from themselves. For some time, a crash in their establishment has been foreseen by those who busy themselves in the affairs of their neighbours. But it seems that the crisis was accelerated by the imprudence of the old gentleman in accepting bills, to enable his eldest son to discharge certain play or turf debts ; but for the settlement of which, he must have forfeited his place under government and his credit in the world.—I mention this, Arthur, because unkind rumours are afloat, that you, the companion of his follies, started for the West Indies so hastily, only to escape being involved in the catastrophe ; and it is this which makes me so urgent for your *immediate* return. Indeed, *indeed*, you must lose no time in coming home !—

" My father who, as you know, is far from partial to the Cleveland family, declares that Robert Horsford is only made the scapegoat for his mother's follies ; and that the ruin

of the family has been brought on by a long series of extravagance ;— London vanities, and prodigal hospitality.—Sir James Armstead, besides paying down the large sum for which the execution was put in, has not only afforded an asylum to them all, but prevailed on his neighbour Mr. Turberville to abridge the term of his son's probation, and consent to his immediate union with Caroline. The Turbervilles, indeed, have behaved nobly. But they will reap their reward. Their son has consented to be bound down against any return to the turf or gaming-table ; and the injurious influence of his brother-in-law will be frustrated, as the young couple are to reside wholly at Turberville Abbey.—Dear Amy, amidst the anxieties she has had to undergo, looks forward to this as a happy addition to her country pleasures ; and if anything were wanting to perfect her attachment to her excellent husband, it has certainly been supplied by the

prompt and liberal aid he has afforded to her family.

“You, my dear Arthur, must not be less kind, or less generous. My aunt Enmore, I grieve to say, contemplates the event in a very different spirit ; and fancies that the impending ruin of the Horsford family, long foreseen by both mother and daughters, was the origin of their matrimonial engagements. She even fancies that her son is relieved from *his* by the disgrace which has befallen Clevelands !—

“But her son will think otherwise.—Her son well knows how fondly he was captivated by the beauty of Florence Horsford, and how sincere and earnest was his courtship. That he could desert her because her father had been arrested for debt, is not in his nature.

“For my own part, I own I foresee advantages to arise for my dear cousin from the downfall of the family. There must now be an end of Mrs. Horsford’s foolish vanities and

ostentations. The three sisters, happily settled, will subside contentedly into domestic life; and could you see dear Amy, with her two pretty little girls, already beginning to forget the existence of a world beyond the walls of Higham Grange or her house in Park Lane, you would admit that, in the atmosphere of a quiet home, the gauzy pinions adapted to that of Cleveland's fall off as spontaneously as leaves in autumn. Florence Rawdon, like her elder sister, will become one of the best of wives."

That the Arthur who was to operate so miraculous a transformation, was of a very different opinion, was little to the purpose. His doom was sealed. Not for a moment did he dream of gainsaying the decree of his cousin. *Her* view of the case could only be just and equitable. Since it became him, as a man of honour, to fulfil his disastrous engagement, it *must* be fulfilled!—

Before he proceeded to the perusal of his

other letters, he opened the desk on his writing-table, to deposit there the ill-omened missive which had conveyed his unexpected condemnation. The first objects that struck him were the two letters he had so superfluously prepared for the morrow's mail—now, alas ! useless and unavailable. But as he flung them petulantly into the fire, and watched them, flame by flame, spark by spark, consuming away, he could not but congratulate himself on the habits of tardiness which had delayed his sending them to the post.—Since his marriage was to be, better far that his reluctance should remain a secret to Florence and her family. The knowledge of his aversion would scarcely increase his chances of domestic happiness.

But when the deed was done, and he had come to the thorough conviction that he must hasten to England, and as precipitately complete his own immolation as he had done that of his letters, how difficult he found it to

confine his attention to the prolix details of his mother's diffuse communication ; her abuse of the artful Horsfords, and satisfaction that their discreditable break-up afforded just grounds for the rupture of his engagement. He must now hasten back to England, she said, and reconsolidate the fortunes of his family by a happy marriage with his cousin ; describing Northover, where she had passed a portion of the autumn, as a paradise on earth, and Tiny as an angel !

The formal epistle of his solicitor intimated only that a deed had been deposited with him by Messrs. Harman and Wrottesley, who undertook to pay into his hands, half-yearly, an annuity of fifteen hundred per annum to the credit of Arthur Rawdon, Esq. of Heckington ; with instructions that if, within three years, the moneys in question were not appropriated by the said Arthur Rawdon, the accumulations were to be made over to some public charity.

A short letter from his friend Charles Turberville completed the despatch ;—a short flighty letter, written in the highest spirits. The break-up of Cleveland's seemed to affect *him* only with joy, as the means of accelerating his marriage. He excused himself for dwelling slightly on the particulars,—since, as Arthur would of course return instantly to England, it was not worth while to write more fully on their family affairs.

“We shall be the friendliest as well as happiest brothers-in-law in the world !” wrote the exulting Charley ; “and Armstead, who, on the recent occasion, has shown himself an excellent fellow, will do all the heavy work for us with the old folks. You will learn, by the way, from the papers, that he is about to be elevated to the peerage as Lord Higham of Higham ; and there is a wonderful flourish of ministerial penny-trumpets, proclaiming how thoroughly this active and meritorious public servant deserves the honour conferred



upon him by his sovereign.—Our country neighbours, who are not quite comfortable at the innovation of a coronet on the old hall-chairs at Higham Grange, pretend that Armstead owes his advancement to the backstairs influence of his brother-in-law;—little surmising that Lord Brookdale has not sufficient interest to place a turnspit in the royal kitchen.

“The truth is, that there has been one of those little Cabinet-quakes which often precede the meeting of Parliament; and Armstead was wanted to play the plausible in the Upper House, as representative of a Department standing much in need of a permanent apologist.

“Old Frere has stepped into the official shoes of the new Peer, as well as into the Privy Council; and these two steady-going, well-broken old colleagues, are by no means likely to upset the coach. Report asserts that your pretty cousin has at length made up her mind to accept the new Right Honourable.

A capital wife for a public man—calm, dignified, wealthy, and—as cold as a stone !

“What a happy family-party next winter in Somersetshire, Arthur ;—you and I and our wives,—the Highams and Freres ! I mean to make the walls of the old Abbey sing for joy.”

Arthur Rawdon’s mind, which had been previously made up, as a door is inextricably closed by the vibration of an earthquake, became again shaken by this reckless epistle.

In the anticipation of such a family circle, *he* could not exult. What ! his Tiny,—his Placidia,—his warm-hearted, noble-minded cousin,—yoked for life with an official automaton, a soulless Red-Tapist,—a withered mummy, without sympathies or affections ?—He would not believe it !—He could not resign himself to such a sacrifice ; a sacrifice, for which there was no excuse or pretext.

“Sophia Corbet was not, like the Horsfords, homeless or penniless. And was she not happier and more independent at Northover, in

the enjoyment of a peaceful competence, than as the wife of a public drudge?—Yes, though styled Right Honourable, a public drudge!—neither his time nor his opinions his own,—harnessed to the car of an administration—if car that deserved to be called, which was a mere hackney omnibus,—a vehicle let out for hire!”

At the mere notion of such degradation of a noble soul, his Creole blood boiled in his veins as he impetuously paced the room. Not even Lady Armstead, in the fretful outset of her married life, had conceived so disparaging an idea of a Downing-Street-official, as, at that moment, the harassed cousin of Placidia!

Then came the malignant whisper of the haunting fiend, Mistrust, to which the heart of man is so apt to lend an ear. Tiny, like the rest of her sex, was perhaps ambitious. Weary of the humble seclusion of Northover, she wished to shine in the world; and the position of the Right Honourable Barton Frere—likely,

like others of his ministerial *clique*, to become Sir Barton Frere, K.C.B., and dignify his wife into a ladyship,—would afford her a far from despicable pedestal. But was it for this she had been enriched by that devoted Willy, who had lavished on her his heart, soul, and fortune?—

It suddenly occurred to him, through the shortsightedness engendered by passion (for in a calmer mood he would have remembered that Miss Corbet had been first courted by the Red-Tapist, when endowed with a mere pittance), that, were the Privy Councillor aware that instead of the four or five thousand a-year assigned to his cousin by common report, she commanded, during his mother's lifetime, scarcely a quarter of the income, he might be less eager in pursuit of her hand; and by an evil impulse, as by his father's spirit revived within him, he placed himself at his desk, and penned his answer to his cousin;—thanked her for her counsels,—gratefully accepted her

proffered liberality, and informed her that, in the course of a few weeks, he should be in England for the ratification of his matrimonial engagements. "He and his wife would spend Midsummer with her at Northover."—And oh! what a burst of hollow laughter echoed through that vast and dreary library, as he traced the words—" *my wife!* "

To young Turberville, he wrote a short letter, under the influence of the same unnatural excitement. "The generosity of his cousin enabled him," he said, "to redeem his pledges to Florence Horsford, at a moment when it was indeed incumbent on him to afford her protection. And though this arrangement would reduce the income of Miss Corbet to comparative indigence, she was far too high-minded to regret a sacrifice essential to the honour of her family."

To Mrs. Enmore, on the contrary, he vouchsafed only a few dry and almost haughty lines; informing her, without deigning to notice her

advice, or her projects, that, in the course of a couple of months, the daughter of the ruined Horsfords was to be his wife :—words easily written ;—more especially, while the demon of jealousy, warring within him, was still active and unappeased.

It was when he had to announce his intentions to Florence herself, that his task became difficult. It was so long since he had addressed her in terms of genuine affection, that there was no need to stoop to the hypocrisy of pretended ardour. But even when endeavouring to envelope the offer of his hand in terms sufficiently tender to avoid the appearance of insult, he felt as if committing a forgery.

Even with this compunction rankling in his mind, he was careful not to close his letter to his future bride without reminding her that their wedded happiness was to be purchased at the expense of his cousin ;—and that by

her concessions in their favour, Miss Corbet had ceased to be rich.

Through the Armsteads, this might still reach the ears of the Downing Street mummy. —*That marriage*,—*that* evil result of the family disorganisation—might, still perhaps be frustrated.

It afforded no small comfort to the harassed man when morning broke upon that night of complex irritation, that an engagement he had made the previous day with Harman to visit the Coffee Plantation of Hurtsfield, forming part of the Enmore property, for which Harman of Spanish Town officiated as the attorney, afforded a pretext for prolonging his stay in Jamaica till the following mail, as well as for quitting Fredville.

Hurtsfield was situated at forty miles' distance, between the hills and the shore, in one of the most picturesque districts of the island; and having despatched his letters, change of scene and air afforded a welcome

relief.—The prim methodical agent, as he took his place beside him in the old sociable, in which he had so often accompanied his turbulent father, but who, remembering Arthur at Fredville in his days of petticoats and spelling-books, was too apt still to regard him as a grown-up child, little surmised the storm of passion brewing in the mind of his companion.

The four old mules, long accustomed to the road, did not maintain their even pace with steadier regularity than Harman continued to prose on and on, concerning the comparative returns of the Fredville and Hurtsfield Plantations. That he received no reply, did not surprise him. Mr. Rawdon was probably engaged in mental computation arising out of his elaborate statistics. For if he vouchsafed no tribute of applause to the admirable plans which poor Harman was taking such pains to expound, he was equally regardless of the beautiful scenery they were traversing;—clefts in the hills, already verdant with the rich



foliage of the wild fig and wild plantain; affording a rich contrast to the extensive plains round Fredville, as yet imperfectly clothed with the tender green of the kittereen, diversified here and there by scattered groups of feathery bamboo. All was lost upon him. He seemed to gaze on vacancy. That "inward eye which is the bliss of solitude" was absorbed by a homely scene far, far, away.—Northover, nestling amidst its lofty elms;—Northover, where he had spent the last peaceful hours he was perhaps ever to enjoy in this world!—

From their five hours' drive, and his own dreary monologue, poor Harman derived the conviction that he had made a stronger impression on the mind of the taciturn Arthur, than he had ever been able to make on the more energetic nature of his brother; and that Mr. Rawdon was likely to convey to his English ward a vast opinion of his zeal and administrative wisdom.

But that the man of business was as deeply engrossed by his petty self-complacency, as Arthur by the strife of passion, he might have been amused at the wild enthusiasm of the Hurtsfield niggers, in welcoming one whom they remembered, or pretended to remember, as "little massa."

In the most slavish of their slave-days, never had they bid *more* slavishly for a holiday and gratuities, by choral songs and frantic dances in honour of "massa;" pointing out among their "piccaninies" certain little ebony Cupids distinguished by the names of "Atty," "Willy," and "Enmore," to mark them as retainers of the "grand old family."— Though well aware that both Hurtsfield and Fredville were now the property of an English "Misee," their notions of proprietorship did not extend further than a belief that, since she was not sister-born to Massa Willy or Massa Atty, she must be the affianced wife of the survivor. In this hope, they en-

deavoured to propitiate him by lavish offerings of early flowers, or preserved fruits served on plantain leaves;—accompanied by the barefaced flatteries wherewith uncivilised human nature emulates the more polished fawning of courtier life.

To the pre-occupied ear of poor Arthur, however, their prayers and petitions were as importunate and meaningless as the noise of their banjos and tomtoms; and right thankful was he when Mr. Harman, provoked by demonstrations of attachment which might end in Mr. Rawdon's becoming more initiated than was desirable in the administration of the property, took upon himself the task of distributing largesse, half-holidays, and speechifications, in the name of the "grand old family;" how little surmising that all which its hereditary representative saw or wished to see in the Hurtsfield Plantation, was the respite from coming cares afforded by the visit!—Arthur's only object was to get rid

of both Harman and his sable satellites, and be alone.

Just as, at Fredville, he had comforted himself by resorting, evening after evening, to the silent grove which sheltered the last resting-place of his brother, did he now wander forth into the tranquil twilight, to escape from the administrative theories of the pains-taking Harman. Unhinged as he was, the beauty of the scenery and fragrance of the atmosphere seemed only to aggravate his distress. How would Tiny have delighted in that lovely spot! Though to *him* the light shadows of the tamarind trees quivering on the path, and the gay humming-birds rifling the nectar of the log-wood blossom were objects familiar from childhood, to *her* they would have possessed the charm of novelty. The conch-shell sounding shrilly from the woods, to summon the negroes to their labour or dismiss them to their rest, or the soft notes of the mocking-bird, would alike have charmed her ear. Had the family project

been carried out, had she indeed become his wife, there, supported by his arm, that gentle cousin would have wandered with him, loving and beloved; doubly united by the sacred purpose of hallowing the memory of the untimely dead, and perpetuating his beneficent projects.

Under such auspices, what noble aspirations would have elevated their minds and purified their hearts! What mattered Heckington and its moss-grown endowments, so long as they could extend the benefits of civilisation to the heathen and the savage!—To fall back from such a mission, and such companionship, to the frivolity of Clevelands and humbug of Mrs. Horsford, was indeed a reverse!—

Absorbed by these bitter contemplations, the period allotted for his sojourn at Hurtsfield, and farewell visit to Fredville, sped like a dream. Those days of reverie once ended, with them departed his privilege of independence. The realities,—the painful

realities of life, must begin ;—friendly interviews with Sir Barton and Lady Frere,—affectionate greetings with the ruined family of his betrothed.

“It is my private opinion,” observed Mr. Harman to his daughters, on returning to St. Mark’s, (after assisting young Rawdon through the worries of embarkation in the fast-sailing mail-steamer, the Pearl of the Ocean,) “that young Rawdon is so cut up, both in body and mind, by the terrible fate of his brother, that he would sooner have taken his place in the family mausoleum, than in the West Indian Mail !—I trust we may not hear bad news of him, my dears.—I am to receive answers, by return of packet, from Miss Corbet, to some important business-letters he has carried over ;—and it would not at all surprise me to find them sealed with black !—”

## CHAPTER XII.

UNACQUAINTED with the antecedents of "Rawdon of Heckington," the cabin passengers in the Pearl of the Ocean were a little disappointed that, after the lapse of a week had reconciled them morally and physically to shipboard and its disasters, and disposed them to be sociable, he alone still kept aloof. Looking forward with eager interest to the termination of their voyage,—some because England was new to them,—some because it was dear,

—*he* alone appeared indifferent to the perversities of wind and tide that were likely to retard their arrival.

His coldness and self-absorption would perhaps have ended in provoking resentment, but that it was noticed with regret how, though exempt from the all but inevitable ailment of sea-farers, he became daily more wasted and more sallow, as if under the influence of organic disease. As he refrained from complaint, however, they ceased to harass him by inquiries after his health ; and settled it among themselves that he was fretting over the loss of the brother for whom he still wore mourning ; and whose miserable end had produced considerable sensation in the land they had left behind.

One or two among them, to whom the gossip of Spanish Town was familiar, ventured to whisper that the alienation of the valuable estates of Fredville and Hurtsfield was perhaps preying on his mind. But the amend-



ment was negatived. Rawdon of Heckington could afford to be afflicted for the fate of his only brother, without reference to pecuniary loss. His faculties were in truth too painfully absorbed to interest themselves in those trivial incidents of sea-life, so eventful to the voyager. What cared *he* for flying-fish, or albatrosses, or shoals of dolphins!—The nearer he approached his native shore, the more intense became the struggle of his feelings.—Where was he to find courage for the scene he had to act,—for the ordeal he had to endure,—for the dissembling into which he had suffered himself to be induced:—for his mother's reviling, — Mrs. Horsford's adulation, — or the calm investigating eye of Sophia Corbet?—

Done and suffered, however, it all must be. Ill as he felt and looked, his strength must nerve itself for the crisis, lest the extent of the sacrifice he was making should become dangerously apparent. With despair in his heart, he

must arrive, if possible, with a countenance arrayed in smiles.

It suddenly occurred to him—but not till the Pearl of the Ocean had sighted the Needles, and all was hurry and happiness on board,—that his task would be less irksome if, instead of exposing himself in the first instance to scenes of altercation with Mrs. Enmore, or of remonstrance with the future Lady Frere, he proceeded at once, as Charles Turberville had suggested, from Southampton to Higham Grange. In taking the family by surprise, he should perhaps escape a scene or two of Horsford dissimulation. At all events, his suspense would be sooner at an end.—Like the condemned wretch who dreads the boon of a temporary reprieve, he feared that his courage might not last out to the end.

Hurrying on, therefore, by rail, immediately on landing, he left his servant to extricate his luggage from the Custom House, and follow him into Somersetshire ; and, but for the cares

tugging at his heart, deep would have been his sense of relief at exchanging the monotony of his stifling "state-room" for the fragrant breezes of the Wiltshire plains, over which he was speeding. The warm, earthy smell, always so refreshing after long inhalement of a saline atmosphere, was rendered more than usually grateful by the invigorating influence of mid May ; hawthorn hedges, already in full foliage, sprinkled here and there by flower-drifts as white as snow ; corn-fields, greener than the pastures — for the pastures, with their exuberant kingcups, were tinged with gold.

But all might have been as the Lybian desert, for any pleasure taken by poor Arthur in the landscape. Miserable mortal that he was,— on his way, as the pensioner of the cousin whom he loved, to take to his heart a wife he had ceased to love !—

It afforded him, however, some comfort, that the meeting was to take place at Higham

Grange, rather than at Cleveland's. At Cleveland's, where he had vowed so many vows, and sighed so many sighs, in honour of the fair-faced Florence, his conscience would have rebuked him for the outrage he was about to perpetrate.—In a strange place, in a new house, he should meet her as a new being, rather than as the woman he had so often sworn to love, for time and for eternity.

It was evening when the fly in which he left the railway-station entered the park-gates of Higham Grange;—*i. e.* that portion of evening which is apportioned as the dinner-hour of an English country-house. The woman at the lodge, who dropped a curtsy as she held back the gate, probably mistook him for an invited dinner guest. For he had not courage to inquire whether the family were at home, or whether “they” were still staying at the Grange.—For all the world contained, he could not at that moment have pronounced the name of “Horsford.”

On approaching the house, on whose innumerable windows the setting sun was brightly shining, he noticed two figures seated on a bench under a group of fine old ilex trees, dark with age, and looking their blackest by contrast with the tender green of the surrounding vegetation ; two figures, which, as he drew nearer, he perceived to be those of the old squire and his daughter. Hastily rising at sight of an approaching carriage, they advanced towards the road, evidently curious concerning the unexpected visitor.

Just as he could have wished !—The embarrassment of a formal meeting would thus be avoided. Hastily stopping the fly, he jumped out and hurried towards them.

Rapid, however, as was his pace, he had time to note that the poor old squire was dreadfully broken ; that he looked shabby, spare, and shaky. Florence, too, was changed. But for the better. Simply dressed, and unusually pale, her depressed aspect roused all

the generous sympathies of his susceptible nature. How much more when, on recognizing him, she clasped her hands with unmistakeably impulsive emotion; and before he could reach the spot where she was standing, would, but that she clung to her father's arm, have fallen fainting to the ground.

From that arm, he took her—deeply touched by her agitation; and folding her in his own, endeavoured, with unaffected sympathy, to tranquillise her rising sobs, and wipe the heavy tears from her cheek.

Instead of tendering the ceremonious compliments with which he came prepared, he burst into very sincere apologies for having taken her by surprise.

It was not till they reached the house, and were seated side by side, and hand in hand, in the old library, while the squire hobbled off to announce to his wife the unexpected advent of her future son-in-law, that he contrived to make her understand the cause of his being

there. That he was the first to announce the arrival of the Pearl of the Ocean, which, retarded by adverse weather, had for some days been anxiously looked for, seemed unaccountable, till he explained that, for expedition sake, he had crossed the country direct from Southampton.

“And Caroline?” — he added, looking round, as if he missed something, on finding the usually fluent Florence startled into dumbness — “Where is she? — Won’t she come down and see me?” —

“Come down? — Have you not heard; — have you not even seen the newspapers?”

“Not one, since I left Jamaica.”

“It will be news to you, then, that Charles and Caroline were married on Monday last. They are gone to Paris. The Turbervilles are to join them, next month, on the Rhine.”

“Hardly fair of Charles Turberville!” said Arthur, a little nettled. “It was thoroughly understood between us, that our marriages

were to be solemnised at the same time. He seemed to have obtained your consent to the double wedding; and I hurried home in that expectation."

"Charles proposed such an arrangement, in the first instance," replied Florence, who had every justification for attributing his annoyance to impatience for the happy event, "because every one supposed you would start from Jamaica immediately on receiving his letter.—When you wrote, instead of coming, he called you a sad procrastinating fellow.—The next mail, he fancied, would perhaps bring fresh excuses; and Mr. and Mrs. Turberville, being opposed to further delay, which would derange all their plans for the summer, insisted that their son should wait no longer."

"Very selfish, and very unkind!"

"They perhaps imagined that you would not like—that you might consider it wrong,—to be married so soon after a family bereavement, and in such very deep mourning."



"Mourning may always be laid aside for a wedding," rejoined Arthur, with a bitter smile. "However, I daresay the Turbervilles had reasons of their own for hastening the ceremony.—Are you better now, dear Florence?" he added, on perceiving that tears were still occasionally stealing down the pale cheeks of his *fiancée*.

Her reply was suspended by the sudden bursting open of the library-door; and Mrs. Horsford flying towards him, brought with her a powerful whiff of aromatic vinegar and a well-got up display of maternal emotion.

"My dearest Arthur!—How well you are looking!—How gratifying, after all our troubles, to welcome you here at last!—The Turbervilles fancied that you would not come for ages.—But *I* knew you better."

"They had no right to suppose so. Nothing but business detained me. Nothing but illness would have detained me longer."

"Still I must blame you, my dearest

Arthur, for not sending us a word of warning.—We are not just now equal to surprises. Our spirits have been sorely shaken.—This dear girl's in particular,"—she added, on seeing that the face of the sobbing Florence was fairly hidden in her handkerchief, while the utmost *she* could accomplish was to apply her own, theatrically, to a pair of tearless eyes.

Explanations or expostulations would have been of little use. But Arthur Rawdon sincerely wished that the squire had not been in such haste to apprise the wife of his bosom of the arrival of her abhorring son-in-law.

"It seems that your haste to be with us has even brought you here without passing through London?" she resumed, half interrogatively. "By this *détour*, my dear Arthur, you have, at all events, escaped a thousand painful cares, connected with the sad event which has cast so deep a gloom over your family."

"If I may be permitted to claim the privi-

lege of a new-comer, my dear Mrs. Horsford," he said, impatiently interrupting her lachrymose allusions, "let me implore the favour of you to spare me, this first evening, all reference to painful or personal subjects. As far as we can, let us dismiss the past. We have all suffered. Let us forget every thing, just now," he added, kindly taking the hand of the agitated girl by his side, "except that we are once more united,—till death us do part."

The quotation was not happy. Yet it seemed to rejoice the ear of the mother-in-law-expectant; who immediately reminded him that the first gong had sounded, and that he must release her darling Flo. to dress for dinner.

He desired no better; nor did they meet again till dinner was announced, and the liberal administration of cold water externally and internally, had smoothed down the swollen eyes and ruffled countenance of poor Florence,

and reduced the husky voice of young Rawdon to almost its usual tone.

Scarcely had they taken their places round the well-served table, when Arthur was shocked to perceive that the pinched nose and fallen cheeks of the old Squire, were not the only indications of his decline. A foolish, fatuous laugh betrayed, every now and then, that his mind was breaking.

“ I *almost* think, dearest Arthur,” said Mrs. Horsford, with one of her blindest smiles, soon after they were seated, “ that Lord and Lady Higham, could they have contemplated this happy reunion of our family circle, would have remained a few days longer at the Grange. But urgent duties recalled them to London the day after the wedding. Lord Higham’s new office demands, so soon after his inauguration, double assiduity ; and dear Amy is to be presented on her elevation to the peerage at the next drawing-room, and has her dress to think about.”

It was not for "dearest Arthur" to avow, in reply, his gratitude to government for having released him, at such a crisis, from the observation of two additional members of the family. He said only what civility required;—something about the acquisition to the aristocracy of so perfect a gentleman as Sir James Armstead and,—as approaching nearer the mother-in-law's perceptions,—the beauty of the wife and family diamonds that were about to illustrate his appearance at Court.

"Yes,—I flatter myself Lady Higham will do no discredit to the peerage. And some day or other, my dear Arthur,"—Mrs. Horsford was beginning in her most mellifluous tones, when a glance at the pale face of poor Florence suspended the words on her lips. Whatever she was about to say or soothsay, was lost to her son-in-law and posterity.

The pause which ensued seemed to render the poor old Squire uneasy. That Arthur, in

accepting his abrupt proposal to take a glass of sherry with him, appealed kindly, and affectionately to his daughter to join them, was almost a relief; and, while performing a ceremony which seemed suddenly to recal to his mind the health-drinkings and thanks-returnings of the wedding-day, he endeavoured to cheer the spirits of the newly-landed Creole by a description of its festivities, and the magnificent presents lavished by the Turbervilles on the bride of their only son;—the pearls of price,—the new travelling-carriage, containing more than the accommodation of Noah's ark,—and the dressing-box of ebony and *vermeil*, that contained little short of a service of plate.

“Somewhat inconvenient appendages for a continental tour,” observed Arthur, “as your son Robert could have apprised them.”

“I don't think Mr. or Mrs. Turberville would have given much heed to poor Bob's suggestions,” replied the candid Squire. “But

I heard George Marsham suggest to Charley, the day before the wedding, that, as they were about to become railway travellers, they had best leave the *dormeuse* and dressing-box safe at the Abbey."

"*George Marsham?*—What had *he* to do with the wedding?"—inquired Arthur, a little surprised.

"Only that, as Charles Turberville's nearest relation, he officiated as his best man. Two of the brothers were staying at the Abbey; a Guardsman, and' the Treasury genius who is thought so much of.—Very agreeable, both of them."

"I had understood that the wedding was to be as private as possible?" rejoined Arthur drily.

"And so it was, my dear boy. In consideration of—in kindness to——"

The real head of the family saw it was time to interfere.

"Mr. Horsford means that it was as private

as was compatible with the position held by the Turbervilles in this neighbourhood," said she, rather stiffly. "They chose, of course, that some portion of their family should witness the marriage of their son. And as Lord Brookdale happened to be in waiting, Lady Brookdale, as one of Mrs. Turberville's oldest friends, proposed to come down with the Highams, in order that her little daughter might assist poor Flo. in her duties as bridesmaid."

"The Marshams and Brookdales?" exclaimed Arthur, addressing his pale *fiancée*. — "In short, it was a very gay little wedding!"

"Not what it would have been had we remained happy and prosperous at Cleveland," observed the poor Squire with a mournful shake of the head, which operated as an effective check to Arthur's queries. But Mrs. Horsford, having been put on her mettle by what sounded almost like a rebuke on the



part of Mr. Rawdon of Heckington, chose to be heard.

“And *for* a private wedding,” added she, “I must say it was as pretty a one as ever was seen. Amy’s was a grand and showy affair; but it cost a world of pains and mint of money. Now on *this* occasion, no pains had been spared to keep the event dark, and the day quiet. But somehow or other, the mystery oozed out, for Mr. Turberville will never obtain a premium for secret-keeping! So when we reached the church, what should we find at the gate but Amy’s school-children, in bran-new dresses, holding wicker baskets tied with white favours, ready to throw flowers before the bride;—and, on coming out again, hundreds of Mr. Turberville’s tenants and labourers, who had trudged over without his knowledge, could not be prevented from dragging the carriage of the bride and bridegroom back to the Grange.—And *such* cheering when they made their appearance in the

porch!—It must have been heard for miles round.”

“Grand doings, indeed,” said Arthur, amused by her maternal ostentation. “I sadly fear,” he added, addressing himself cheerfully to Florence, “that *we* must dispense with obsequious tenants and Lady Brookdale!”

Again did Mrs. Horsford contrive to intercept her daughter’s reply, by calling his attention to the beauty of the forced fruit just then placed on the table; adding nauseous eulogies of the liberality with which Lord Higham had taken care to provide them throughout the winter with the finest produce of his garden and succession-houses, instead of having them forwarded to him, as usual, to Park Lane.

Had her encomiums been prompted by genuine gratitude, they would have done her honour. But Arthur Rawdon was now too familiar with her artifices not to perceive that these vauntings of the generosity of her Right

Honourable son-in-law, purported only to afford to himself a lesson and example ; just as the boasts of the wealth and grandeur of the Turbervilles with which she beset him throughout the evening, were intended to remind him that it was by no means poor Florence who was making the great match of the family !—

## CHAPTER XIII.

OF the four individuals who surrounded the following morning the cheerful breakfast-room of the Grange, though they had retired the preceding evening at an unusually early hour, on pretext of the fatigues and agitations of the day, none looked refreshed by the interim. A certain air of mutual constraint still embarrassed their deportment.

But by degrees, feelings more natural expanded. There is a peculiar sociability about an

English breakfast, the inaugurating incense of the domestic day. — Among foreigners, the morning fast is broken by a cup of coffee, or a cigar, taken without ceremony; while what is called the second breakfast, towards noon, is a heavy meal. But the English breakfast-table, with its glittering accessories, its steaming urn, and varieties of household delicacies, — above all, its self-service, forestalling all interruption to the interchange of morning salutations or plans and projects for the day, exercises a wholesome influence over the spirits.

Arthur found himself insensibly soothed, either by the

Cups which cheer but not inebriate,

or by the lovely face of the lady in the white muslin wrapper, by whom they were concocted. Decidedly, he had never seen Florence Horsford look half so pretty! The contrast afforded by her delicate features to the monstrous faces

of his attendants at Fredville or Hurtsfield,—nay, even to the sallow complexions of poor Mary and Martha Harman,—might, perhaps, in some degree enhance his estimate of her attractions. But he was forced to admit to himself, that her beautiful face, and gentle voice now softened by the chastening of adversity, had not maintained, in absence and at a distance, the pre-eminence which was their due. But it was impossible not to recognise the admirable beauty of her who was about to become his wife. He admitted now, as during his Oxford vacations, that Florence Horsford was one of the prettiest creatures in the world.

He was beginning to long to tell her so, or something thereto approaching, as they stood together at the window opening to the lawn, through which the balmy air of May breathed warm and genial into their faces; but Mrs. Horsford attached herself immoveably to their side. To whatever Arthur whispered, *she* responded. She seemed bent upon forestalling

his glances at the delicate cheek and slender form of her "darling Flo." Even when, hoping to get rid of her, he beguiled his lovely *fiancée* into the conservatory which circled the southern front of the breakfast-room, *there*, like an echo to their steps, pattered the idle ejaculations of the officious mother-in-law ; protesting that "he could not be sincere in his admiration of that miniature Eden, since he must have seen far more exquisite flowers and plants in the West Indies."

Not particularly desirous just then to be reminded of the West Indies in any shape, Arthur allowed her to gabble on, unanswered. But it was not a reply she wanted. She was there only as an obstacle, or marplot. She was there, only as she had so often been in former days when penniless younger sons were impending over one of her daughters, to frustrate all danger of a *tête-à-tête*.

"Yet would you believe it, my dear Arthur," she continued, while they were inhaling the

delicious fragrance of the *Mandevillea*, or admiring the sunshine shed on the walls by the golden blossoms of the *Hebertia*—"would you believe that Amy, who used to be so fond of flowers, never so much as took the trouble, when she was here the other day, to go round the houses! Poor Harkwell, the head gardener, was quite hurt by her indifference; for he had put forward a new orchid, which he fancied would charm 'her ladyship' even more than her new coronet."

"And so it would have done, mamma," interrupted Florence, almost as impatient as Arthur of her importunate attendance,—“but that poor Amy had never before been parted from her children, and was miserable the whole time she was here. She had no thoughts to bestow upon orchids!”

Pleased with her kindly interpretation, Arthur entreated permission to fetch her garden-hat and overshoes, that she might accompany him into the grounds. And when



Mrs. Horsford began to prophesy rain, and create other impediments, he said in so decided a tone that he wished to have a walk and talk with Florence, that she had not courage to raise further objections.

"My servant can scarcely arrive till the second train," said he, when Florence quitted them for a moment to prepare for her stroll. "Till my luggage reaches, me I am unable to despatch my letters to town, to prepare the way for my appearance. But when once that task is accomplished, I must think of following;—of business,—of all the plagues and penalties of life. Till then, I am a gentleman at large, and wish to enjoy myself. My greatest enjoyment must be, of course, undisturbed conversation with my future wife."

The hint was so broad a one, that the not usually tell-tale complexion of Mrs. Horsford varied for a moment. But she speedily resumed her self-complacency; and having followed the young couple as far as the hall

door, stood smiling as she watched their departing footsteps ;—kissing her hand, with sportive tenderness, as they vanished into the shrubbery.

But into how different a face did those false features contract, when all trace of the happy pair disappeared ; and she turned back into the hall to go in search of the Squire, and inflict on him her conjugal admonitions for the day !—

A great relief meanwhile to Arthur to escape the thralldom of her prying eyes, and shabby inferences ! The close and trimly shrubbery verged, after a few hundred yards, into a beautiful copse ; whose turfen paths were bright with spring flowers,—wood-anemones, violets, and lilies of the valley ; while the half developed foliage of the oaks, and their pendent bloom, scarcely sufficed to conceal the innumerable song-birds flitting from bough to bough. The very atmosphere breathed happiness and peace ; and there was more than

the banality of a common-place remark in the observation with which Florence at length broke silence, that—"Charles and Caroline had auspicious weather for their journey,—that it seemed made for a honeymoon!"—

"The more reason for my regret that our own marriage was not also solemnised on Monday," rejoined Arthur. "For my own part, I have earned a right to fair weather; for my passage home was a succession of storms."

His companion seemed grateful to him for introducing a topic that involved no personal allusions; and immediately proceeded to question him concerning his sea-adventures, and the life and landscapes of Jamaica.

But though she infused into her inquiries as much interest as her mother's daughter could always manage to assume, it was clear that, while he answered her questions, her eye, ear and mind, were absent. None of those quiet retorts or lively sallies, of the days of

Clevelands. Her manner was almost deferential :—her countenance, almost vacant.—

He had no right to resent her change of manner towards him. It was *his* alienation which had created hers. It was his coldness which had estranged her heart. He must make it his duty, if not his pleasure, to recall her former predilections. To soften and attach her into domestic companionship, as Lord Higham had attached her sister, he must devote himself to the cultivation of her better instincts. Since they were to be united for time and for eternity, he trusted it would be for “better” rather than for “worse.”

Still it was vexatious, that, instead of discoursing with him heart to heart on topics connected with their relative position, she chose to indulge in idle chit-chat ;—such as the attentions her family had received from the Bradden Branshaws during their sojourn at the Grange, and the improvement which the snubs of London-life had produced in Mrs. Ommany’s

foolish sons. Though he had expressly entreated to be exonerated from painful family reminiscences, he would rather have found her more alive to the loveliness of nature on that auspicious day, than to the petty incidents of an uninteresting neighbourhood.

All this miserable gossip at length so wearied his spirits, that he was even thankful when they emerged from the leafy covert, so full of poetry, so full of all that "could please, if any thing could please ;"—and, having wound back through the park towards the spreading ilexes, under whose shade he had found her resting the preceding afternoon, he was much relieved to find the bench untenanted.

Seated by her side, he should at least, while listening to her prattle, luxuriate in a view of that lovely face, whose exquisite delicacy would impart if not a charm a palliative, to the insipid anecdotes she was relating.

But as if bent on neutralising every advan-

tage he was desirous to concede, Florence now began to talk of Tiny.

"You do not appear very enthusiastic about Fredville!" she suddenly observed. "Your description of Jamaica will scarcely tempt Sophia Corbet to visit the West Indies!"

"I hope not—I sincerely hope not," was his abrupt rejoinder. "Tiny is much more wanted at home. It was my poor brother's wish, quite as much as it is mine, that she should reside at Northover."

"*Continue* to reside at Northover?"—added Florence, in a hesitating, yet significant tone.

"That is, till she is married," added he, correcting himself. "Sir Barton Frere is of course too great a man for Henry Corbet's quiet establishment. Though I suppose even *that* has been improved since his daughter became a woman of fortune."

"I have heard of no changes; except that she has sent her brothers to Eton, to learn

manners, instead of the Grammar School where they were learning writing and ciphering."

"Quite right! Should Lady Frere have no children, they will succeed to the Fredville estate."

Miss Horsford seemed almost piqued at hearing him refer to his alienated West India property, without a syllable of blame or accusation. But it was not, just then, her cue to be resentful.

"But is Tiny *really* to marry Sir Barton Frere?" she inquired, with a smile of disparagement.

"So Charles Turberville wrote me word. And *his* information on the subject ought to be authentic: his cousin George Marsham being the official shadow of the new Privy Councillor."

"I don't think Mr. Marsham knows or cares much about the matter," replied Florence. "Charles Turberville probably wished to enliven a dull letter by a piece of news."

Sophia Corbet refused Victor Ommany, last autumn, and his mother, who was anxious for the match on finding Miss Corbet turn out an heiress, told us that she assigned as the motive of her rejection, her determination to live single for the sake of her brothers ;—some say, in consequence of a promise made to her step-mother on her deathbed.”

“A most heroic plea for spinsterhood !” was Arthur’s bitter rejoinder. “As if my cousin had not sufficient grounds for refusing a prating jackanapes like Victor Ommany, without quite so romantic a pretext.”

Perceiving that he was vexed, Florence endeavoured to modify her statement.

“After all, it is not impossible that there may be some engagement between her and Sir Barton,” said she. “For what but a desire to reside in the neighbourhood of Northover, can possibly account for his eagerness to possess Cleveland’s ?”

“Does Sir Barton wish to possess Cleve-



lands?"—exclaimed Arthur, with sudden interest;—perhaps at the idea of a place he so much disliked, falling to the share of a man he equally detested.

"He has been in treaty for the purchase ever since,—ever since,—that is—" She had not courage to refer in direct terms to the ruin of her family.

"Ever since Mr. Horsford wished to dispose of it,—" said Arthur, composedly.

"My poor father, Heaven knows, has no wish to part with the place. But I fear it is inevitable, unless some very unlooked-for change should occur in his prospects.—Robert, indeed, is of opinion that, come what may, it would be an advantage to get rid of it, and clear off every incumbrance."

"It would be presumption on my part, who know so little of Mr. Horsford's affairs, to give an opinion concerning their management," replied Arthur, in a more conciliatory tone. "But with his home-circle so much dimi-

nished,—his daughters married,—his sons dispersed,—Cleveland appears almost too large for him. And it is the very thing for a placeman ; —the very thing for a Sir Barton Frere ;— who wants a Tusculum to which the express-train will convey him from Downing Street, within an hour, to breathe and think, at leisure.”

“ Provided he can breathe and think within reach of Sophy Corbet, no doubt he will be satisfied,” retorted Miss Horsford. “ And both my father and Bob are inclined to close with his proposals. It is only mamma who demurs. She rather wants Mr. Turberville to take it, for Charles and Carry. The Abbey is an inconvenient distance from town.”

“ It can’t be too far, for the sake of my friend Charley,” rejoined Arthur, frankly. “ His safety and happiness depend on his leading a quiet country life, more or less under the control of his parents.”

“ Not a very pleasant prospect for his wife, and moral extinction for himself !” rejoined

Florence, shrugging her shoulders. "Turberville Abbey is a comfortable residence, certainly. But so thoroughly out of the world!—So remote from all that is intellectual or refined."

Arthur could scarcely refrain from a smile. What a falsetto flight for his pretty Flo:—a whole octave higher than her natural voice! Was it Lord Higham's political advancement, or George Marsham's pamphleteering rhetoric, which had given such a start to her imagination?

"I don't conceive, however," was all he replied, "that the Turbervilles would be pleased at losing sight of their only child. And they seem to have acted nobly on occasion of his marriage."

"Yes,—kindly enough. And they are really attaching themselves to Carry. But it would be better for all parties if the young people had a home of their own."

"*That*, I am convinced, was Mrs. Hors-

ford's suggestion!" was the involuntary exclamation of Arthur.

"Mamma is certainly of that opinion,—because she knows the world and human nature."

It was not for her future son-in-law to apprise her daughter with how very limited a portion of either, the petty manœuvrer was conversant.

"Still, I don't think Carry inclines much to the purchase of Clevelands. The place is so out of condition. There would be so much to be done. And, as George Marsham says, they could make nothing better of it, after all, than a cockney villa."

Both the man quoted, and the opinion quoted, jarred against the better taste of Arthur Rawdon. It was not thus that Florence should have allowed a comparative stranger to disparage her childhood's home. Well did he remember with what spirit poor Tiny had resented his own criticism of the shortcomings of Grenfield House!—

“At all events, the place would be better suited to a London official, like Sir Barton Frere,” he observed, “than to a young fellow of Charles Turberville’s age, whose chief object in a country-life consists in field-sports; and the shooting at Clevelands, and hunting of Hertfordshire, are a mere joke. The manor at Turberville, on the other hand, is a noble one; and admirably preserved.”

“It would be curious to see Sir Barton established there, and Tiny doing the honours of Clevelands!” said Florence, carelessly.

“It would be something more than curious,” said Arthur, in a low voice, shocked at her heartlessness.

“Why, I have no doubt she would acquit herself very well?” added his companion in a tone of patronage. “How well she got on at Northover; and how much she made out of that wretched little garden!”

“She made it,—what a woman of taste and refinement can make out of far worse materials,

—a paradise on earth !” rejoined Arthur, with swelling indignation.

But Florence Horsford was not the high-spirited or rather pettish Florence of former days, and chose to overlook the gauntlet thus flung down.

“ Her merits are very generally appreciated,” she replied. “ No one is more popular *now*. All the world is beginning to accord her the superiority which the Highams discovered in her long before she became an heiress.”

“ They were indeed her first friends ; and Tiny is sincerely attached to your sister.”

“ She would not, however, accompany her down to Carry’s wedding, the other day. It is true her mourning was too recent to be laid aside, even for a day. And then, she had been with poor Mrs. Enmore throughout her illness, quite to the last.—And just after witnessing such melancholy scenes”—

“ Of what are you talking ?”—interrupted Arthur, his face ghastly with horror so manifest,

that his consternation began to impart itself to his companion.

"I beg your pardon, dear Arthur. I forgot your injunction to us not to advert, at present, to your family afflictions."

"To *mine*?—It was to your own I begged you would refrain from alluding.—But what of Tiny?—What of my mother?—Why do you say *poor* Mrs. Enmore?"—

"Is it possible you can be still ignorant that she has been nearly three weeks in her grave?"—murmured Florence,—tears—but rather of terror than sympathy—beginning to steal down her blanched cheeks.

The distracted looks and clasped hands of Arthur Rawdon afforded a sufficient reply.

"It was on that account," she resumed, "that the Turbervilles hastened the wedding. They did not wish you to arrive in the midst of a gay celebration, in which at present you could take no part. But we hoped—we believed—that the newspapers had apprised you ;

and that it was to avoid a further stress upon your spirits, you had avoided passing through town."

Still, he uttered not a syllable.—He seemed paralysed by the shock.—

"DEAD!"—he muttered, at last, in a husky unnatural voice. "And she must have died immediately after receiving my last letter;—doubtless of a heart broken by the intelligence it conveyed!—My poor unfortunate mother!"—



## CHAPTER XIV.

To hasten to town—to hurry away from the Horsfords—was his first impulse,—and speedily accomplished. Again leaving his servant and luggage to follow him by the evening train, he was soon on his road to London. The six hours of the journey passed as one. His senses were stunned—his eyes seemed 'dazed. He had scarcely recovered his perfect consciousness when he arrived at those lonesome Chambers in the Albany, where he had been some days

expected and prepared for by the porter's wife; who pointed, with an air of solemn deference, to heaps of letters lying on the table.

The only one he opened was a black-bordered envelope, addressed in Miss Corbet's hand-writing.

It contained but a few words :—

“As soon as you arrive, dearest cousin, come to us at Northover. I have much to say, which it would be painful to write.”

Without further refreshment, therefore, than a crust of bread and glass of water, he started off. Little more than another hour would convey him to what he could not help regarding as “home;” the presence, namely, of the only surviving human being who thoroughly sympathised with his feelings.—At that moment, he had forgotten there was a Sir Barton Frere in the world.—At that moment, she was again his own Tiny.

A bribe to the mail-train guard secured him a compartment to himself;—how essential to his agitated state of mind ! It was nearly a year since he had seen Sophia Corbet ; and how many painful explanations must be exchanged between them. What might he not have to learn respecting his mother's last moments !—She might have cursed him as a parricide, and prohibited, on penalty of her eternal malediction, the marriage he had announced !—

On the other hand, his cousin, whose letters had referred exclusively to his own affairs, might interrogate him concerning that lost brother, the very sound of whose name was as a dagger thrust into his heart. She might want to talk of Fredville,—of the grave where he was laid,—of the reverence paid to his memory,—of the justice dealt to his murderers. All that he had contemplated with anguish, as likely to await him at his first meeting with his mother — his unfortunate

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mother—was perhaps that very night in store for him !—

But, by degrees, the charm habitually exercised over his mind by the influence of Placidia, and the anticipation of her gentle voice and serene countenance, obtained its usual ascendancy. He felt as if about to drift into calmer seas,—into a haven from the storm. It was almost a matter of regret to him that he was not fated to approach her as her pensioner, the object of her alms-giving, as of late he had sometimes bitterly anticipated. But his feelings towards her were now altered and subdued. *Now*, she was the ministering angel who had smoothed the dying pillow of his “child-changed” mother.—Now, she was once more the kindly, humane cousin, with whom he had been wont to stroll under the old elms of Northover.

To his amazement, he found the family sitting up in expectation of his arrival. No grand preparations. No forced fruit or flowers,

as at Higham Grange. But open arms and open hearts, as well as hospitable fare ; and by the unembarrassed warmth with which Tiny, at their meeting as at their parting, clung to his embrace, he saw at once that it was a sister only who awaited him.

During his hurried journey, his thoughts, wandering occasionally to the affianced wife he had been forced to quit so abruptly, could not but inspire a fear that his recent accession of fortune had produced the abject deference exhibited towards him by Mrs. Horsford and her submissive husband. But he also fancied, and hoped, that the depressed spirits of Florence arose equally from his recent bereavement. It was doubtless her grievous consciousness of the evil influence exercised by the announcement of their marriage to his heart-broken mother, which produced her altered looks and irrepressible emotion.

But how different the case with Tiny ! No

self-accusation to blanch *her* cheek, or agitate her nerves ! And though she wore a suit of sables as gloomy as at their last interview in Hertford Street, nothing in her self-governed deportment evinced perturbation of mind. She was now mourning only for one of the sad events naturally interwoven with every human lot ; and all she wanted to say to that dear cousin who was not only her mother's nephew, but who so singularly resembled her poor lost Willy, was, that his mother had forgiven and blessed him before she died !

How she had been forced to plead and implore on bended knees, ere she obtained that concession, it was needless he should ever know. Enough that Mrs. Enmore had been worked upon to say, before her rigid lips closed for ever,—“Then let him make her his wife. Forgive us, oh, God ! our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.—May they be happy together, Tiny, may they be happy !—See that Harding and Parkins

have their annuity punctually paid. See that —(what is this grasping my throat?)—See that—God bless you, Tiny!—God bless my poor son!”—

The frenzy of passion which had preceded this concession,—the paroxysm produced by perusing the letter from Fredville in which Arthur announced, with little ceremony or precaution, that he was on the point of returning to England for the purpose of making Florence Horsford his wife, she had from the first resolved to keep for ever from his knowledge. No good could arise from the communication. And if perfect candour be a virtue as well as a delight, a discreet suppression of facts that impart only pain, and of which the disclosure falls short of a duty, may be accounted a merit scarcely inferior.

With that velvet softness of touch which supplies, with the kindly-natured, the tact exhibited by the worldly, she handled the most painful subjects without inflicting pain. Facts

or opinions, which, in the hands of a Mrs. Horsford, would have created vexation and opposition, were accepted without challenge when related by Tiny ;—not crudely, or curtly, or coldly ;—but with a charitable interpretation of the motives in which they originated.

“My poor aunt had not much to bequeath,” she added, after making it clear to her cousin that Mrs. Enmore’s last mention of him was made in the most Christian spirit. “And as she knew you would henceforward command the full enjoyment of your property, and that my own income would be doubled by her death, she wisely resolved to leave the little in her power to the relative who needed it most.—*You* would not have liked to reside in Hertford Street, Arthur. *You* would not have endured its dingy furniture and meagre comforts ; which, for poor Lucretia Rawdon, to whom Mrs. Enmore has assigned the ten years’ remnant of her lease, constitute the utmost luxury.”



"But Lucretia cannot afford to live in so large a house?"

"My aunt has settled on her a few hundreds a-year, which, in addition to Willy's annuity, will convert her into an opulent woman. And surely no member of the Rawdon family will resent that one of its survivors is thus rescued from poverty; more especially, since such was the influence of Harding and Parkins over the mind of my poor aunt during the last few months of her life, that, had she not made her cousin Lucretia her residuary legatee, we should have seen one or other of them succeed to property which ought not to go out of the family."

"She is heartily welcome to all she has got, poor old creature!" said Arthur,—far less interested than he ought to have been in the proprietorship of his father's plate and library. "Heckington and its accumulations more than suffice *me*. You have relieved my mind from an unspeakable weight, Tiny, by satisfying

me that my mother died in peace and charity with a son who had afforded her only vexation and disappointment.—Had I been aware of her illness, however,—had you written, dearest, as you ought to have done,—to tell me she was declining,—I should not have loitered on, at Fredville, when once that wretched trial was brought to a conclusion. Had I then returned, a reconciliation might have been effected; and I should have spared myself one of the poignant regrets that will embitter my future days.”

Miss Corbet listened in prudent silence.—Why should a still deeper regret overcloud his life?—Why should a dark shadow haunt the home awaiting him, from learning that Mrs. Enmore’s illness and death arose solely from the excitement of finding that, instead of the marriage with herself, to which she had obstinately looked forward to reconsolidate the Enmore and Rawdon estates,—a marriage between Heckington and Fredville rather

than between her son and niece,—he was about to connect himself with the ruined family which, even in its palmy days, she despised !—

He slept, therefore, that night, for the first time for many, strengthened and comforted. He was under the roof of loving friends. He was subjected to a beneficent influence. Henry Corbet had wrung his hand, in bidding him good night, almost as paternally as if it had been that of his own Alfred ; and the weary, harassed master of Heckington Hall closed his eyes with a benediction on all around, and thanksgivings that his worst apprehensions were at an end.

His mother had forgiven him before she died !—

Next morning, he rose to May sunshine, and the calmness of a pleasant country home. At his request, poor Tiny accompanied him to the village church, where, beside the husband and parents by whom she had been so harshly

dealt with, Mrs. Enmore had desired to be laid ; and Miss Corbet, who with her father and Lucretia Rawdon attended the ceremony, even to the verge of the family vault, appreciated the few faltering words of gratitude by which her cousin recognised the service.

After the performance of a duty so sacred, both parties, had their inclinations been consulted, would have returned home to silence and seclusion, for the remainder of the morning. Even after getting rid of Susan Moore, now the custodian of Heckington Church, neither of them spoke. But there was perfect sympathy between them. They felt as one. They felt as thoroughly united in heart and soul, as man and woman should never feel unless the altar has solemnised or is about to solemnise, their union. But it would have been difficult for those twain, as they threaded the venerable oaks planted by their forefathers, united by kindred blood, united by common afflictions, by common reminiscences, and

above all by the geniality of the season and familiarity of the scene, to feel otherwise.

Henry Corbet was not, however, the man within whose jurisdiction sentimentality, even when grounded on rational foundations, ever found encouragement. He knew what Mrs. Enmore had been, through life,—what a thorn in the side of every human being connected with her ; and saw no necessity that his daughter, to whom she had been so surly an aunt, or Arthur, with whom, from his boyhood, she had been on harsh and grudging terms, should persuade themselves into any superfluous cherishing of sorrow. Tiny had done her duty to the dying ; Arthur had shown becoming respect for the dead ; and now, the best thing they could both do was to exert themselves, and resume the customary duties of life.—Where was the use of repining over the past ?—

By forcing them to be reasonable, he did as he would, under similar circumstances, have

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been done by.—But injudicious people, in following that golden rule, though they may render themselves acceptable to their Creator, often become extremely unacceptable to their fellow-creatures.

“I want you, my dear Arthur,” said he, cheerfully accosting them as they approached the head of the piece of water ornamenting the park, “to admire how much I have been able to do for the lake. You remember how miserably reedy it had become? The brook was quite insufficient to feed it, and it was degenerating into a swamp. But by good luck, in cleaning it out and hollowing the bank near the upper dam, last autumn, we cut into a capital spring, that supplies I can’t tell you how many tons of water a day.—And now, you see, there is not so much as a rush on the margin; — always full, — and always clear!”—

Arthur looked, and saw,—and cared not! The bright mirror exhibited by the Heckington

lake reflected, just then, only the blue sky over its still expanse.

“If I were you, Arthur,” resumed his uncle, warming with the survey of his handiwork,—  
“I would plant yonder Northern bank. It wants clothing. That naked hill was always an eye-sore; and a belt of Weymouth pines intermixed with beeches and abeles, would soon make a show, and be cheerful all the year round. When once you are married and settled, Arthur, you will probably spend your winters at Heckington. You’re fond of hunting, I think?—I remember meeting you, in pink, two years ago, when you were stopping at Cleveland’s.”

“In those days, I was fond of many things I have ceased to care for,” replied his nephew, in a fretful tone. “And I hope to spend my winters in some warmer spot than Hertfordshire,—the coldest county in England!”

By this assertion, he brought the farmer heavily on his shoulders. Even Tiny thought

it necessary to rouse herself in defence of her native county.

"At all events," replied young Rawdon, replying rather to his own arguments than to theirs, "a winter or two must elapse before Heckington is placed in habitable order."

"Tu, tu, tu, tu!—It is in *excellent* order at this moment," cried Mr. Corbet. "The repairs of the roof cost a matter of two hundred pounds! And since we put in the patent hot-air stove, in the basement-story, — (an expensive job, Arthur, but the only means of airing so large a house,)—there has not been a vestige of damp, from hall to attic.—Has there, Tiny?"—

"I spoke rather of ornamental than useful repairs," rejoined Arthur, despondingly. "I must not disgust my wife with her new home by introducing her to the faded, old-fashioned furniture, decaying there for a century. When we visited the place together, two years ago, she told me how odious she thought it. Now,



in the altered state of her family-fortunes, she may not like to find fault ; and I am therefore doubly bound to execute all I then promised."

His cousin, who was leaning on his arm, pressed it approvingly. And as her father had just stepped aside to scatter with his walking-stick a couple of unsightly molehills, he added, in a lower voice—" Besides, the kindest thing I can do, is to remove her for a time beyond her mother's reach. The little I have seen of them, since my return, convinces me that if I wish her to become my wife, instead of Mrs. Horsford's daughter, I must cut the wires of the electric telegraph.—A year or two on the continent would break that pernicious influence."

"An influence which might have proved injurious had the family still resided at Cleve-lands ; but as it is, the Horsfords will never be in your house, Arthur, except by invitation. And you would be so much better in a home of your own, than rambling about

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the Continent!—I am beginning to think, with Mr. and Mrs. Turberville, that half the young people who marry, become unsettled for life by squandering their first year's happiness in foreign countries."

"Little Tiny turned moralist and preacher!"—whispered her cousin, with the first smile she had seen on his face since his arrival.

"Because, dear Arthur, I have it so much at heart that you should reside at Heckington!—Throughout our recent family affliction, my consolation has been that *now* you would assume your proper place as head of the family, and make it all it ought to be."

Again he pressed her arm.

"How little you know my inadequacy to such a task!—Heckington has passed within the last century into many incompetent hands; but into none so incompetent as mine!—No, no, Tiny!—Your father (and here he comes to say yes or no!) must still abide at Northover, to be the real guardian of the property; and

you, darling, will be at no such great distance from him as to prevent your superintending our improvements, and affording him your taste."

"Still, Arthur, however much interested in Heckington, I can exercise no authority. I can never be what you and Florence would be.—Think better of it, cousin.—Settle, at once, under the roof of our fathers, and afford me the benefit of such kindly, such valued neighbours!"—

Henry Corbet, with his good-humoured, full-blown face, was just then approaching ;—talking about moletraps, and the parish rat-catcher.—The answer of his nephew must be brief and speedy.

"No, dear Tiny," said he, "I have not at present, the slightest intention of residing at Heckington."

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## CHAPTER XV.

IN accordance rather with his own plans than with the wish of the Horsfords, Mr. Rawdon determined that his marriage should be solemnised at once, without regard to his family-mourning. Lord Higham was the only member of the family who seconded his views. Perceiving that the broken old squire was drawing near his end, and that if the match were, in consequence of his death, indefinitely postponed, the wayward nature of the bride-

groom might create insuperable obstacles, he strenuously supported his future brother-in-law's proposal that the wedding should be solemnised at Higham, by special license; the father and mother of the bride officiating as sole witnesses of the ceremony.

Every thing concurred to render privacy desirable; and the recent demise of Mrs. Enmore afforded a respectable pretext for the curtailment of the festivities which had attended the Turberville celebration.

All the public had to learn, was contained in the formal announcement of the newspapers, that "after the ceremony, the happy couple left the church-door for Dresden, *en route* for Switzerland and Italy."

It was only Miss Corbet who, in the calm contemplative seclusion of Northover, had leisure to surmise, from this direction of their travels, that Arthur, still dwelling on the past, was bent upon converting his bridal excursion into a pilgrimage;—that he wanted to visit

every spot sacred to the memory of his brother ; —the Dresden where he had been so much beloved ;—the Interlachen whither he had hurried, in the long-constrained outburst of his fraternal affection ;—the Lausanne, where he had been so brutally repulsed by the intervention of Robert Horsford !—

But she felt also,—was it with pain or pleasure ?—that none of these sacred reminiscences would be confided to his wife.

“ Of course, my dear Miss Corbet, we shall have them back among us in spring,” observed little Mrs. William Hartland, in a consolatory tone, the first time she obtained admittance at Northover, after the marriage. “ I had a letter yesterday from Mrs. Horsford, who is naturally anxious, poor dear, to hear what is doing and saying in her old neighbourhood ; and *she*, I need not say, has been a little put out by such a huggermugger wedding, and this foreign tour. But then, as she says, so long as people are in family-mourning,

it don't much signify where they are. And she adds, *entre nous*, that dear Flo. has made up her mind that, winter where they may, they will be in London for the season."

"I doubt it. Mr. Rawdon dislikes London ; and it is more than probable that Florence herself, like Lady Higham, will be less fond of it, now she is settled."

"Why yes,—as you say,—Mrs. Rawdon will probably be less fond of London life, now she is settled.—But *that* need not prevent them from spending next summer at Heckington.—There is so much for them to do !"

"The very reason my cousin adduced for staying away. He seemed to think the place would be pleasanter to his wife, if she found it complete, instead of beset by bricklayers and carpenters."

"Why certainly,—it would be very disagreeable to be beset with bricklayers and carpenters. But are they going to build, then ?"

"I know very little of their plans. Mr. Rawdon has deputed my father to be his clerk of the works."

"And an excellent clerk of the works Mr. Corbet will make!—But it is not true, then, as Mrs. Horsford inquired of me in her letter, that he is about to leave Northover?"

"On the contrary, my father, at his nephew's earnest request, has taken a seven years' lease of the farm."

"And a better tenant, I am sure, it would be impossible to find!—But I fancied,—that is Mrs. Horsford fancied,—that it would be necessary for *you* to proceed to the West Indies, to look after your property; and that, as a matter of course,—as a matter of *propriety*,—Mr. Corbet would accompany you."

"The agent attached to the estate for the last thirty years, still resides there," replied Tiny, a little annoyed at having to submit to a cross-examination for the benefit of Mrs. Horsford.—"The West Indies have not been



propitious to the health of such members of our family as have heretofore visited Fredville."

"No,—the place has certainly not been very propitious to those members of the family who have visited Fredville. Still, as Mrs. Horsford remarks, the eye of the master is everything!—No colonial property is safe unless occasionally superintended by the eye of the master!"

"But as my late cousin, the proprietor of Fredville, had been able to make an accurate survey of the property previous to his cruel death"—

"Cruel, indeed!" interrupted her visitor. "A strange business, was it not?—And who could have imagined, as Mrs. Horsford has often remarked, that while we were enjoying that picnic with you last summer, and the startling news broke up the party, poor Mr. Rawdon was already superseded in his Jamaica estates, as well as at Northover!"

It was something of a trial, even to Placidia,

to be thus harassed by the silly Echo of a very mischievous woman. But too wise to indulge in superfluous self-vindication, she allowed Mrs. Hartland to go chattering on.

“Certainly, considering how charming a young man Mr. Rawdon may be considered, he has been most hardly used by his own relations.—The Horsfords alone have stuck to him in all his reverses! Even his mother,—what an extraordinary will his mother seems to have made;—leaving her house in May Fair and everything she possessed to a half-crazy cousin, whom Mrs. Horsford well recollects that the family was once on the point of locking up in a lunatic asylum.”

As this part of the accusation poor Tiny could not controvert, she contented herself with remarking that the house and furniture of the late Mrs. Enmore were not of a nature to have suited the fastidious taste of Arthur and his wife.

“Very likely not, my dear Miss Corbet.

But *that* was no reason for defrauding her eldest son of his rights. And as Mrs. Horsford very fairly hints, the house would have been the very thing for *her*; and if they did not choose to inhabit it themselves, they might have lent it to her.—So close to Lady Highham, too;—so everything she could desire!”

No need to explain that it was perhaps to frustrate such a purpose, Lucretia Rawdon had been selected by Mrs. Enmore to be its proprietress.

“However, *you* will benefit as much in this case as in that of Fredville,” added the officious country-neighbour. “You will of course spend your London seasons with Miss Rawdon?”

“I have as little taste for London as my cousin Arthur,” replied Tiny; “nor have I the slightest wish to quit Northover.”

“Very natural that you should have little wish to quit Northover,—such a charming spot;—and so much as Mr. Rawdon has done

for it,—it would have been a great thing for the Horsfords, driven as they were from Cleveland, to secure such a retreat as North-over ! Mr. Horsford is fast declining ; and to be near Dr. Ashe, who knows his constitution, would perhaps have set him on his legs again ; and it was reasonably to be expected that Mr. Rawdon of Heckington would come forward as liberally in behalf of his father-in-law, as Lord Higham of Higham Grange.”

“ He could scarcely dispose of a farm of which my father holds a lease.”

“ Oh ! *that* might have been arranged. Some other farm could have been substituted. Besides, as Mrs. Horsford justly says, Mr. Corbet has Grenfield House to fall back upon ; to say nothing of the fine fortune his daughter has withdrawn from the family. I only repeat Mrs. Horsford’s words, my dear Miss Corbet,” added the illbred little gossip, when an involuntary start betrayed poor Tiny’s

susceptibility to the charge. "And really *some* indulgence is due, poor woman, to her undeserved misfortunes!"—

"Neither kindness nor indulgence has been wanting ; and as a counterbalance to the misfortunes you speak of, her children are happily settled in life. I find that Mr. Turberville has procured an excellent family living for Richard ; and Lord Higham is about to purchase a commission for Claud."

"Which, in Mrs. Horsford's opinion, renders Mr. Rawdon's backwardness only the more remarkable. You must admit that, Cleveland's being let, it would have been highly satisfactory to reside within distance of the place, and see what their tenants were about."

"Not to the tenants, I imagine," replied Tiny with a smile.

"I forgot that Sir Barton Frere was a friend of yours. However, even *you* must feel that, had Mr. Rawdon lent Heckington to the

Horsfords during his absence from England, he might have derived much benefit in his improvements from the taste and *savoir faire* of his mother-in-law ; presiding, as she did, for so many years, over such an establishment as Clevelands."

"While *you* have seen nothing beyond the poky penuriousness of Grenfield House," — though not added, was so plainly implied, that Tiny could not forbear observing—"Mrs. Horsford could scarcely feel more interested than myself in the improvements of Heckington,—a place founded by my forefathers ; where my poor mother was born and died, and where I myself saw the light."

"To be sure, your mother was born and died there, and you yourself saw the light under its roof. One is apt to forget *that*. One is so much more accustomed to connect *you* with Northover, and Mr. Corbet with Grenfield House !—Everything in this life is so transitory. Family seats pass out of

families. Though *we*, for instance, are down in the 'Landed Gentry' as 'Hartlands of Shrublands,' Shrublands belonged, only a few years ago, to some people of the name of Jones!—No doubt we shall be having the Freres inserted, shortly, as the 'Freres of Clevelands.' But no! as *they* are but tenants on lease, *that* can never be. Mr. Horsford was only able to sell some sixty or seventy acres of land, which he had added to the property ;—just enough to satisfy a few clamorous creditors; the original Clevelands estate being so stringently settled on his children, that it could not be sold during the minority of Dick and Claude—"

"Which will expire so soon, that Sir Barton may still make the purchase.—But you speak of *the* Freres, as if he were married?"

"I speak of *the* Freres a little prematurely; for the event, though settled, will not take place till the close of the session. Official men seem to render even their deaths and

marriages subject to the decree of the Red Book."

"And may I ask the name of our new Cleveland's neighbour?"

"Now, my dear, *dear* Miss Corbet—as if you did not know!—You, who are in all Lady Higham's secrets!"

"Amy has become a very bad correspondent. I seldom hear from her now."

"But this affair seems to have been settled at Higham Grange, last winter. Poor Sir Barton appears to have been vastly disappointed at not obtaining the hand of Florence, or Caroline. As if, as Mrs. Horsford justly observes, either of those attractive girls would have married an old man like *him*!"

"A rash remark for Lord Higham's mother-in-law," observed Tiny, no little amused by Mrs. Horsford's "just observations."

"Lord Higham's is an exceptional case.—Lord Higham is so superior a man, and so highly connected!—Whereas, this Sir Barton



Frere (Mrs. Horsford tells me) is the offspring of an official inkbottle and a hank of red-tape. No one knows more of his origin, than that he was once a clerk, and is now a Privy-Councillor."

"A rise for which he must be indebted to talent or merit——"

"Or luck!" interrupted Mrs. Hartland. "He was found useful to government at some Congress, or Signature of a Treaty; and has, from that day to this, been careful to *remain* useful to those who are useless."

"He will, at all events, be an acquisition to the neighbourhood," said Tiny, feeling bound to uphold the friend and colleague of Lord Higham.

"I am *very* glad to hear you say so. I'm sure it is very amiable of *you* to take his part," rejoined Mrs. Horsford's echo, evidently meaning to imply that Miss Corbet had been thrown over by the baldheaded P.C. "Mrs. Horsford seemed afraid that——But I daresay Miss

Bradden Branshaw will make him an excellent wife. As he could not secure one of Lady Higham's sisters, he seems to have been bent on obtaining one of her favourite country neighbours."

Recollecting the pains taken by Mrs. B. B. and her daughters to attract the attention of one or both of Lord Higham's London guests when the Turberville Abbey ball was impending, Miss Corbet could readily understand how the match had been accomplished. But she was forced to listen to Mrs. William Hartland's assertions that, "dear Mrs. Rawdon was overjoyed at the idea of having her charming young friend settled so near her; that it would perhaps be an inducement to hasten her return to Hertfordshire. That her daughter had secured so desirable a companion of her own age, in so dull a place as Heckington, was a *great* comfort to Mrs. Horsford."

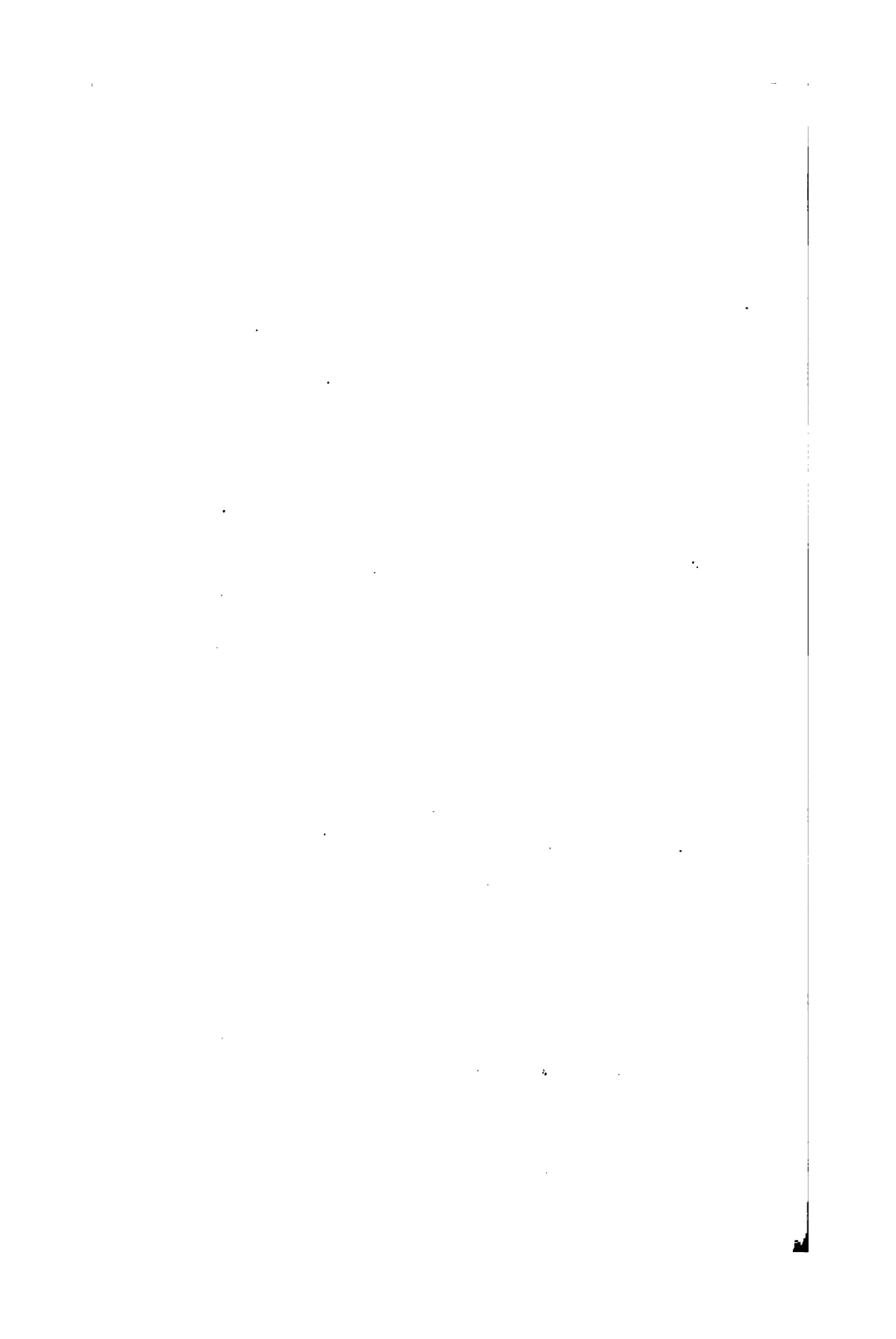
Poor Tiny bore even this unkindest cut of all with a patient smile, fully justifying her

name of Placidia ; praying only that her cousin, if, on his instalment under the roof of his fathers, similarly goaded by the impertinence of his wife's family, might prove equally forbearing.

But who was to foresee or foretell the results of an union between families and natures so antagonistic, as those of Arthur Rawdon and the Horsfords !—

END OF VOL. II.





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